

The Capitulation of Bucharin

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS OF THE RIGHT WING NOW?

By Max Shachtman

A week after the Daily Worker announced the action of the November Plenum of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in removing Bucharin from the Political Bureau, and two days after the Revolutionary Age triumphantly informed its readers of the "disintegration . . . of Trotskyism", the press carried the Moscow dispatch on the capitulation of the international leaders of the Right wing, Bucharin, Rykov and Tomsky.

The exact wording of the capitulation is not yet, of course at hand. The Associated Press dispatch, however, quotes the statement of Bucharin in part:

"For nearly two years we opposed the Central Committee in a series of political problems. We consider it our duty to declare that in this dispute the Communist Party and its Central Committee proved to be right and we were wrong.

Bucharin Will Fight the Right!

"Admitting our mistakes, we promise together with the Communist Party to fight decisively against deviations from the Party general line, particularly against Right wingers, in order to overcome all difficulties and assure full victory for socialist construction."

The capitulation is therefore apparently "complete". Not only to the Right wing leaders beat their own breasts in humility and confession, but they announce themselves prepared to beat the heads of all "Right wingers" in addition. The picture of Bucharin, Tomsky and Rykov fighting against the danger of the Right wing is indeed a rare one, comparable only to that of the Catholic Church fighting intolerance or Tammany Hall fighting political corruption. And the Daily Worker can hardly contain its joy at the fact that the Right-Center Bloc in the Russian Party and the Comintern is about to be reestablished for a "strengthened struggle against the Right danger and Trotskyism."

Why did Bucharin capitulate? Does the capitulation mean the liquidation of the Right danger in the Soviet Union? Will Bucharin, Rykov and Tomsky remain in their present, newly-adopted position for a long period to come? The answer requires a word on the nature of the Right wing in the Soviet Union.

The workers' state is today experiencing the accumulated effects of the contradictions of a proletarian revolution in a backward predominantly agriculture country, an island isolated in a capitalist sea, seeking to maintain itself in a period of the retarded world revolution. Since the height of the revolutionary wave in Europe had reached with the opportunity missed by the leaders of the Germany Communist Party in 1923, the Soviet republic has gone through six years of reaction, a reaction based upon a proletarian state. In this period, national tendencies grew at the expense of internationalism, opportunism at the expense of a revolutionary line. In this period occurred the Menshevik enormities of Stalin and Bucharin in the Chinese revolution, the British general strike, the Pilsudski coup d'Etat, and in the general back-sliding into capitalist channels in the Soviet Union. This period marked the organizational defeat of the Opposition and its expulsion from the Party, its imprisonment and exile.

The Roots of the Right Wing

This period marked the rise of the Right wing danger in the Soviet Union primarily. The social-economic roots of this tendency are always latent in the situation, since, as Lenin pointed out, capitalism continues to grow out of the very soil of the Soviet Republic in Russia. But the policy of yielding to the elements of capitalism, followed by Stalin and Bucharin, created a basis for an enormous growth and confidence of the Right wing. Behind it stood the Kulak, the Nepman, the bureaucrat, the concessionaire and world imperialism. And since these elements cannot legally express themselves politically in the Soviet Union, because of the monopoly of the Communist Party, they found another way: they exerted such a pressure as built and strengthened a Right wing inside the Communist Party. In other words, the Right wing was the political expression of the new possessing classes in the Soviet Union, of the restorationist elements, of Thermidor, that is, of the carrying out of the bourgeois counter-revolution still under the outward forms of the proletarian state.

For years the policy of yielding to the Thermidorian elements in the country was practised by the bloc of the Right wing and the Center (Bucharin and Stalin), a bloc in which the policies of the Right wing prevailed. Precisely because of that

the Opposition, representing the elements continuing the line of the October revolution, was beaten in the Party. It was a sacrifice offered to reaction.

The passivity of the workers during this period of the blows of reaction is now swiftly disappearing. Out of this resurgence of proletarian strength, aided by the persistent fight of the Opposition, came the struggle by Stalin against the Right wing, which has led to the latter's capitulation.

Why was it so easy, comparatively speaking, to deliver a defeat to the Right wing in the Party? Precisely because its strength lies not so much in the basic elements of the Communist Party as it does in the alien class elements outside the Party. Therein lies the peculiar nature of the Right wing. Stalin can mobilize the proletarian forces in the Party against the Right wing not because the workers are so enthusiastic over the bureaucratic indecisiveness of Centrism, but because they are stubbornly hostile to the Right wing and the enemy class behind it. The Right wing cannot mobilize its strength inside the Party to any sufficient strength to challenge Stalin. That was proved in the Moscow and Leningrad Party organizations, both controlled by the Right wing, and both of the cleared of the outstanding Bucharinites in less time than it takes to tell.

How the Right Can Fight

The Right wing will be able to measure swords with Stalin when it gets ready to mobilize the class forces that support it outside the Party. But to set these forces actively into the motion means civil war—no less—and the first step towards counter-revolution. This, and nothing else, is the concrete meaning of what Stalin (only last year) called the "capitalist restorationist" elements represented by the Right wing, and what Trotsky calls the danger of Thermidor.

Bucharin has capitulated for the time being only. That is plain from the social roots of the Right wing, which are such as will press, at a more favorable moment, for a renewed offensive by the Right. Bucharin and especially Rykov calculate: No need of being cut to pieces now by this ignoramus. We will wait. Next year will be a hard one for him. The five year plan will begin to meet its real difficulties. The Kulak will begin to press hard. We may be harassed on the East or West by the

The Party's Adventure in the I. W. C.

BOSTON—The collapse of the mechanical control established over the Independent Workmen's Circle by the Communist Party bureaucrats, foretold by us many months ago, is now proceeding at full speed. At the last convention of this Jewish fraternal labor order in Chicago, the Stalinists packed the sessions with delegates from small, newly-formed branches and "captured" the organization with a vengeance. All opposition was ridden down rough-shod, and a series of resolutions adopted which stamped the Independent Workmen's Circle as purely Communist Party from beginning to end. The Daily Worker was endorsed. The Freiheit was given the same O. K. The Left wing unions were officially adopted. The Communist Party was approved. All this was done with ruthless gusto and disregard for any of the consequences.

A Reaction Sets In

So completely did the Party "take over" the organization that a reaction set in among the members. It must be borne in mind that the I. W. C., from its leadership to its membership, has always been considered an anti-Forward and pro-Left wing organization. It has always supported every Left wing institution and campaign. The membership was definitely sympathetic to the Communist movement. The I. W. C. was one of the most fertile recruiting grounds for the Communist Party, particularly its Jewish section, and the latter was gradually establishing its ideological and organizational influence in the ranks.

Not satisfied with this steady progress, and anxious to grab every possible position and keep it under absolute, air-tight Party control, the Stalinists prepared their little adventure which the Communist movement is going to pay for heavily. No sooner had the Party installed itself in power in the organization, than it proceeded to run the I. W. C. like a Prussian drill master. Only those officially approved by the rul-

ing imperialists. Things will get too hot for Stalin. He will hardly know which way to turn. Then we will be right there in the Political Bureau with our program which he will have no choice but to accept. Then we will see.

A New Right-Center Bloc

What can be expected, therefore, is a reconstitution, on a new basis, of the old Right-Center bloc, shattered by proletarian blows and the whip of the Opposition. This foreshadows a veering to the Right by the leadership of the Russian party, and therefore the Comintern. There is no doubt that Bucharin, as a vanquished ally, will have a far greater influence in the councils of the Party than the Bucharin who has for the last few months been the public target for all the official "theoreticians" and bootblacks of the Centrist apparatus. That he will use this influence against the Left, i. e., against the Leninist Opposition led by Trotsky, a hundred times more than against the Right, should be clear to anyone except the hopelessly gullible who swallow Bucharin's declaration of "war" against the "Right wingers".

Another consequence will be a smarting blow at the international Right wing. A few formal cracks at them from Bucharin himself will be more than many of them can stand. The Stalinists will use Bucharin's capitulation to the maximum—and very clumsily and stupidly, if the Daily Worker is any criterion—in order to drive a knife through the various Right wing groups.

Deprived now of an international base, which has become, particularly since the Russian revolution, the most essential prerequisite for orientating oneself in the revolutionary movement, the Right wing will go through a process of differentiation. Some parts of it will go over to the social democracy. Others will capitulate to the Stalin apparatus, a process that will not be halted by the fervid avowals that the Right wing does not support any faction in Russia (see Lovestone in the current Revolutionary Age). Still another section will conclude the process of disillusionment with the Right wing and the Centrist swamp by a reversal of its position and adherence to the Left Opposition. The Lovestone group in the United States which of all the Right wing groups in the International has the weakest ground in principle or tradition beneath it, will pass through this differentiation more rapidly than others. Its leadership stands condemned by its entire past. Its ranks, which contain many Communist workers whom the fear-stricken Stalinite idiots were unable to retain, and whom Lovestone will not keep forever with his fairy tales about the "disintegration of Trotskyism," belong to the Leninist Opposition.

and the Party has now been transformed into a legal battle of lawyers before the very honorable and respected courts of Massachusetts.

In the meantime, the elements previously in the leadership of the order, formed a Committee for Non-Partisanship in the Independent Workmen's Circle. Among the leaders of this group are to be found Left Wingers, so-called Centrists, and some who are undoubtedly connected with the Right wing in one way or another. But the movement has passed beyond its leaders, and represents far more than they speak for. The members supporting this movement are not against the Left wing, but against the arbitrary, narrow, mechanical, bureaucratic methods employed by the present Party leaders. It is quite true that if the Party persists stubbornly in its present course, the Right wing will be able to play cleverly upon the sentiments of the Left wing workers, pull them away from the Communist movement, and strengthen the hand of reaction in the Independent. Against this tendency, it is the duty of every class conscious militant to fight. The welfare of the Independent as a fighting arm of the labor movement, calls—not for a fight against Communism and the Left wing—but a fight for the Left wing, for the strengthening of the Communist movement, against the reawakened Right wing, and against the adventurist policy of the Stalinists. The fact that the Right wing will try to make as much capital as possible out of the present situation, requires the utmost vigilance and resistance on the part of the class conscious workers who built the Independent into a source of strength and pride for the Left wing.

Left Wing Workers vs. C. P.

The "Non-Partisan Committee" movement cannot be ignored. It is not a Right wing movement. It has the support already of the majority of the membership, and the largest branches in the order. Branch 7, Worcester, the largest in the country, Branch 75, Pittsburgh, the second largest, Branch 18, 19 and 27 of Dorchester, Branch 24 of Chelsea, 29 of Revere, 40 of Peabody and many, many others that were always supporters of the Left wing, and prominently known as Left wing Committee. More than 50 branches are affiliated with the Committee. If these workers who always cherished the Left wing are steadily won over to the Right in the course of this fight, the cause for it will lie chiefly in the stupid, unpardonable blunders of the Stalinite pupils in this country, who are incapable of winning workers for Communism and constantly create splendid opportunities for the reformists in every field.

The comrades of the Communist League (Opposition) in Boston and in Chelsea in particular are actively engaged in preventing a drift to the Right or away from Communism and the Left wing in the I. W. C. Without giving any endorsements to the leaders of the Impartial Committee, they are conducting a struggle for the retention of the nonpartisan, all-inclusive and Left wing character of the Circle. They oppose the wrong policy of the Communist Party and the efforts of the Right wing to establish its control over the organization, as well as the inexcusable, anti-working class action of the Board of Appeals in procuring a court injunction, which gives the capitalist class an open hand in deciding working class disputes.

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