

The Defense of the Soviet Union and the Opposition

Continued from Last Issue

At one time, the Red Army entered Menshevik Georgia in order to help the Georgian workers overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie, something for which the Second International cannot forgive us to this day. Georgia is populated by Georgians, the Red Army was composed mainly of Russian soldiers. On which side does Louzon stand in this old conflict?

And the march on Warsaw in the summer of 1920? Louzon perhaps knows that I was an opponent of this campaign. But my objections had a purely practical character. I feared that the toiling masses of Poland would not rise in time (the tempo of war is as a rule swifter than the tempo of revolution) and was of the opinion that it would be dangerous for us to move too far away from our base. Events confirmed the correctness of this foresight: the march on Warsaw was a mistake. But it was a tactical, and in no sense a principle mistake. Under more favorable circumstances it would have been our duty to help the Polish (as well as every other) revolution with an armed hand. It was, however, precisely then that Lloyd George, Bonar Law and others accused us for the first time of Red Imperialism. This accusation was then taken over by the social democracy, and from there it was imperceptibly transmitted to the ultra-Leftists.

Against revolutionary "intervention", Louzon quite inopportunistically raises the old and uncontested principle: "The liberation of the working class can only be the task of the workers themselves." On a national scale? Only in the frame-work of a single country? Should workers of one country help the strikers of another? Send arms to the rebels? Send their army, in case there is one, to help the rebels? Or for the purpose of preparing an uprising, just as strikers send their brigades to pull the workers out of factories that have remained behind?

Why Doesn't Louzon Decide to Go the Whole Way?

Louzon stands upon the national-democratic viewpoint, but he does not remain entirely true even to that. If it is true that the Chinese government is fighting for its national liberation against Soviet Imperialism, then the duty of every revolutionary does not consist in administering philosophical enlightenment to Stalin, but to help Chiang Kai-Shek actively. From Louzon's attitude, if it is to be taken seriously, arises the direct duty to help fight for China's right to national self-determination against the heritage of Czarism, if possible with arms in hand. That is as clear as day. Louzon refers and rightly, to the fact that the Soviet government helped Kemal against the imperialists. Quite right: against imperialism even the hangman Chiang Kai-Shek must be aided. But here the brave Louzon remains standing irresolutely. He feels in some way or another that the conclusion following from his position would sound something like this: Workers of the world, help the Chinese government defend its independence in struggle against the assaults of the Soviet state. Why does Louzon remain standing half-way along the road? Because this only consistent conclusion would have converted our ultra-Left formalists into agents of imperialism and into political accomplices of those Russian White Guardists who are today fighting for the "liberation" of China with arms in hand. This inconsistency is a credit to the political feelings of the ultra-Leftists, but not their logic.

Are Socialist "Concessions" Admissible?

At this point, comrade Urbahns and his closest colleagues in the national committee of the Leninbund enter into the dispute. In this, as in most of the other questions, they strive to adopt an intermediate position. They print an article by the Korsch disciple, H. P., an article by Louzon, an article by Paz, an article replete with errors by the Belgian comrades, a Marxist article by Landau and one by me. Then the editors finally come forward with an eclectic philosophy which borrows two-thirds from Louzon and Korsch and one-third from the Russian Opposition. Figuratively it says: "We are not in one hundred percent agreement with Trotsky." Basing himself essentially upon Louzon, Urbahns however, does not limit himself to geography and ethnography. But his attempt to add

the class viewpoint, that is, to supplement Louzon by Marx, yields truly unhappy results.

Let us examine the program article of the *Fahne des Kommunismus*, (the theoretical organ of the Leninbund).

"The railway represents, even now, a Chinese concession to a foreign power, a concession which, viewed from the Chinese side (!) is different only in degree (!!) from the other concessions that are held by imperialist powers." ("On the Russo-Chinese Conflict", No. 31).

Here we still have before us the purest Louzon. Urbahns teaches the German revolutionists to estimate the facts from the "Chinese side". But it is from the proletarian side that they must be estimated. The question is not exhausted by national frontiers.

In the first place it is sheerest absurdity that a proletarian state should, generally speaking, not have any enterprises ("concessions") in other countries. The question of the formation of industrial enterprises by a workers' state in backward countries is a question not only of economic, but also of revolutionary strategy. If Soviet Russia has rarely followed this path, it has not been for reasons of principle but as a result of technical weaknesses. Advanced, that is, highly industrial socialist countries like England, Germany and France would be interested in every instance to build railroads, to erect technical works, grain elevators, etc., in the backward countries, the former colonies. Naturally, they would do this neither by means of violence nor of generous gifts. They would have to receive certain colonial products in exchange. The character of these socialist enterprises, their direction, their conditions of labor would have to be such as would raise the economy and culture of the backward countries with the aid of capital, technique and experience of the richer proletarian states, to the mutual advantage of both countries. That is no imperialism, no exploitation, no subjugation, but rather the contrary, it is the socialist transformation of world economy. There is no other road at all.

If in England, for example, the dictatorship of the proletariat were to be set up, it could on no condition present the Indian bourgeoisie with the present English concessions. That would be the most stupid policy, for it would enormously strengthen the power of the Indian capitalists and feudalists allied with them over the Indian proletariat and peasantry and hold up the development of the socialist revolution in India for a long time. No, the workers' state will be compelled, while it proclaims the complete freedom of the colonies, to liberate the concessions from all national privileges, from the command of the one side and the degradation of the other. Without letting go of the concessions, the workers' state would at the same time be compelled to transform them into a means not only for the economic rise of India but also for the future socialist construction. It is self-understood that such a policy, which would be necessary also in the interests of the consolidation of socialist England, could be carried out only hand in hand with the vanguard of the Indian proletariat and would also have to bring visible advantages to the Indian peasant.

Let us endeavor, together with Urbahns, to consider the question from the "Indian side". The result will be that the socialist "concessions" would be far worse for the Indian bourgeoisie than the capitalist, if only because they would have to cease mercilessly the profits of the bourgeoisie in the interest of the Indian workers and peasants. Conversely, the socialist concessions will be a powerful point of support for the workers and peasants, a socialist fortress, so to speak, where the forces for the preparation of the revolution could be gathered. Naturally, the Indian proletariat, as soon as it came into power, would receive these concessions. The relations of the Indian proletariat to the English workers' state will be regulated not by the recollections of bourgeois property but by higher principles of the international division of labor and socialist solidarity.

There are, consequently, no simply Indian or simply "Chinese" sides. There is only the side of Chiang Kai-Shek. There is the side of the advanced Chinese workers.

There are innumerable intermediate stages of the petty bourgeoisie. When Urbahns tries to consider the matter from the "Chinese side", he is really looking through the glasses of the Chinese petty bourgeoisie who does not know what position to

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adopt in a difficult situation and on what side to fight.

Mistakes in Principle in Estimating the Chinese and Russian Revolutions

Up to this point, Urbahns really only repeats Louzon. But then he "deepens" him. If the editorial article of the *F. d. K.* is cleared of its reservations, equivocations and loopholes in general, it can be resolved into the following formula: since the national revolution has triumphed in China, and the counter-revolution has triumphed (or almost triumphed, or must triumph) in Russia, then... what? A clear answer is not given by the article. Its eclectic philosophy serves much more to dodge a clear answer.

I think it is necessary to make the following preliminary assertions before a further presentation:

1. Comrade Urbahns* falsely comprehends the character of the Russian revolution and its present stage. He falsely construes the meaning of Thermidor.

2. Comrade Urbahns misunderstands the class mechanics of the Chinese revolution and its present situation.

3. From his false social evaluations, he draws correspondingly false and extremely dangerous political conclusions.

4. The fact that he (like Louzon and the other ultra-Leftists) does not carry his conclusions to the end, only shows a lack of consistency, but in no way diminishes the danger of his false position.

I am compelled here to quote a larger excerpt from the *Fahne des Kommunismus*. The editorial article endeavors to explain the conditions that created the "national liberation movement" in China.

"...a national liberation movement that bore a revolutionary character, had a distinct point against the imperialists, and in which the Chinese proletariat represented its class interests (!!!) This revolution came to a standstill in the bourgeois revolution, brought the military power of Chiang Kai-Shek to the top, bloodily suppressed the Chinese proletarian revolution, the revolutionary peasant uprisings which infringed on private property, and brought the Chinese bourgeoisie closer to the aid of the bourgeois revolution. One of these aims is national unification... The concessions of the imperialists are a painful thorn in the side of the China that is being unified. Their elimination is sought from the imperialist powers through negotiations, from Soviet Russia, which is considered an essentially weaker opponent, by means of military attacks. Therewith (!) it is also decisive for the Chinese military government that the Russian concession is a more dangerous factor from the class standpoint than the concessions of the capitalist 'hostile brothers'. This conflict should have been foreseen by all, for there could not be a peaceful co-existence of the Chinese and Russian interests in China of the bourgeois revolution. Such a collaboration could have been guaranteed only by a victorious Chinese revolution. Even if it had only ended with a workers' and peasants' China..."

I can hardly recall ever having encountered such confusion of thought in a few dozen lines. At any rate, not often. To unravel each line a page would be needed. I will endeavor to do it in the shortest form, leaving the secondary contradictions out of consideration.

In the first half of the quotation, it speaks of the imperialist concessions, among them also the Chinese Eastern Railway, being a thorn in the side of the national independence of China. The Soviet republic is here brought into one denomination with the other capitalist states. In the second half of the quotation, it is said: therewith it is decisive (!) that the Russian concession, from the class standpoint, appears still (!) more dangerous. Then there finally follows from these two mutually exclusive declarations the synthesis: the Chinese and the Russian interests are in general irreconcilable. In what sense and why? From the first half of the quotation it follows: Russian Imperialism is incompatible with Chinese national unity. From the second

*I speak here, and further on also, of comrade Urbahns only for brevity's sake. I mean the majority of the national committee of the Leninbund and the editors of its organs. Indeed, one can frequently find the expression in *Volkswille*: "The national committee of the Leninbund and comrade Urbahns."

half of the quotation it follows: the interests of workers' Russia and bourgeois China are incompatible. Which of these two mutually exclusive declarations does Urbahns choose? He does not choose, he unites them. In what manner? By the little word "therewith" (in German: *dabei*). Five letters and the problem is solved.

The irreconcilability of the interests of the Soviet republic and bourgeois China, says Urbahns, could have been foreseen by anyone. Good. Consequently, it is not a matter of the railway and not of the treaty of 1924? The irreconcilability in the relations between present-day China and the Soviet republic only reflects the irreconcilability of the internal contradictions in China itself. Were Urbahns to say that the Chinese bourgeoisie, supported by bayonets, hates the Soviet republic because of the fact alone that its existence forms the source of revolutionary unrest in China, that would be correct. To that would still have to be added that the Chinese bourgeoisie designates its fear of its own oppressed masses as fear of Soviet imperialism.

Urbahns says that the bourgeois revolution triumphed in China. That is the standpoint of the international social-democracy. In China, it was not the bourgeois revolution but the bourgeois counter-revolution that triumphed. That is by no means the same thing. Urbahns speaks of the suppression of the workers and peasants as of some internal detail of the bourgeois revolution. He even goes so far as to assert that the Chinese workers represented their interests in the national revolution, that is, in the Kuo Min Tang, where the Comintern drove them with sticks. That is the Stalinist, i. e., the social democratic standpoint. The bourgeois revolution was accomplished in 1911, in so far as it could at all be realized in China as an independent stage. But it was accomplished only for the purpose of showing that a bourgeois revolution, even if only somewhat completed, is impossible in China, that is to say, that the national unification of China, its liberation from imperialism and its democratic reformation (the agrarian problem!) is inconceivable under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The second Chinese revolution (1925-27) showed during its whole course what had been clear previously to the Marxists: The real solution of the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in China is only possible through the dictatorship of the proletariat, basing itself upon the alliance of the workers with the peasants, and which is directed against the alliance of the native bourgeoisie with imperialism. Such a revolution, however, cannot remain standing at the bourgeois stage. It is transformed into a permanent revolution, that is, it becomes a link of the international socialist revolution and shares its fate. For this reason, the bourgeois counter-revolution, which obtained its victory with the help of Stalin-Bucharin, mercilessly suppressed the movement of the popular masses and erected, not a democratic, but a military-fascist domination.

The Question of the Permanent Revolution in China

In the first half of the excerpt quoted from comrade Urbahns' paper, it says that the bourgeois revolution triumphed in China. In the second half, it declares that the collaboration of China with Soviet Russia would be conceivable only in case of a "victorious Chinese revolution". What does this mean? According to Urbahns, it was the bourgeois revolution that triumphed in China. That is just why it strives to pluck the imperialist thorn from its side. Then of what other revolution is Urbahns speaking? Of the proletarian? No. "Even if it had only ended with a workers and peasants of China." What does the *if* mean? It means precisely that it is not a question of the proletarian revolution. And at the same time not of the bourgeois? Then which one? After Bucharin and Radek, Urbahns therefore foresees neither a bourgeois nor a proletarian, but some kind of a special workers and peasants dictatorship in China. One must speak out more openly, courageously, definitely, without hiding behind the little word "even". It is precisely out of this philosophy of the non-bourgeois and non-proletarian dictatorship that the Stalin-Bucharin course of the Kuo Min Tang grew. It is precisely over this point that Radek and Smilga stumbled. Stalin, Bucharin, Zinoviev, and after them Radek and Smilga also, believe that between world imperialism on the one side and the workers' state on the other, a petty bourgeois revolutionary dictatorship is possible in China. In spite of the experience with the Russian