

# Foster's Return and the «New Wind» in the Comintern

Centrism is a parasite in the revolutionary movement. Having no firm foundations in the working class, and no ideas of its own, it must perforce live alternately on the Right (reformist) wing and the Left (Bolshevik) wing, falling back in the end into the camp of reformism. The most "perfect" example of Centrism in the revolutionary movement is the Stalin faction in the Russian Communist Party and the International. That it has been conducting a pseudo-Left course for the past year or more only brings out into bolder relief the course towards Menshevism it pursued together with the Right wing (Bucharin-Tomsky-Rykov) for the four or five years previous. But just as Centrism has never been capable of conducting a consistent line, so also has it been essentially incapable of holding to a course to the Left for an extended period. The Centrist helmsman may hold the rudder to the Left under the storm of a proletarian wind but he has a fatal yearning for the reposeful shores to starboard.

Stalinist Centrism is now preparing to make the turn to the Right which has been inherent in the whole situation since the most recent course was undertaken. The first indications are already at hand. The record of Centrism in the past enables us to illuminate the factors known, to connect them, and to draw the necessary conclusions. In this manner, we will be able to observe the similarities between the present trend of events and the developments in the International and the Russian Party after the year 1923.

The fatal blunders of the leadership of the International and the German party in October of that year (Zinoviev, Stalin, Brandler, Thalheimer) ruined the revolutionary opportunities in Germany. The leaders of the Russian party, who bore the main responsibility, made first-rate scapegoats of Brandler and Thalheimer only later, through the work of the Opposition, was it revealed that the German leaders had merely carried out the timid, opportunist instructions of Stalin and Zinoviev who played no different role in the German revolution than did the latter and Kamenev in October 1917.

## The «Leftism» of the 5th Congress

The Fifth Congress that followed inaugurated an epoch of sham Leftism in the International, remarkably similar to that instituted by the Sixth Congress and the Tenth Plenum, and causing just as much havoc in the revolutionary movement. The similarity extends even to the question of the leadership foisted on the various sections of the International: the ultra-Leftist leadership of the period of the Fifth Congress (Ruth Fischer, Maslow, Treint, Suzanne Girault, Neurath) have their replica in the creatures of the Sixth Congress and the Tenth Plenum (Thaelmann, Neumann, Monmousseau, Bonte, Gottwald, etc.) So far to the «Left» did the post-Fifth Congress regime in the International go that it chided the Bolshevik Opposition (Trot-

sky) with being to the Right (!)

gle for power. It absorbs, concentrates and crystallizes the experiences of past struggles. It illuminates the path to power with its theoretical clarity and precision. It is at once the vanguard and the directing staff of the workers. Without it, they are like a lance without a point. There is no substitute for the revolutionary party: that is one of the basic—if not the principal—distinctions between the Marxist and the syndicalist.

The failure of the Comintern under its present leadership to help establish a Communist Party—rather, the prevention of its establishment—has been one of the severest possible blows to the Indian revolution. This criminal defection must be overcome immediately. Without a Communist Party, without a revolutionary political instrument of the proletariat, the national revolutionary movement will have a «Chinese ending». Without it, it will be impossible for India to go through a «non-capitalist development», that is, to pass beyond the «democratic» revolution to the dictatorship of the Indian proletariat, which is already schooled in bitter battle. Without it, all talk of Soviets is a stupid mockery with possible reactionary consequences. Without it, the Indian revolution may have an Indian 1848—i. e., a vic- of the bourgeoisie and a set- for the working class because of its immaturity or organizational-political un- preparedness, but never an Indian 1917.

sky) with being to the Right (!)

But the Left jag did not last very long. Before they had much of a chance to warm the seats of power, the Fischers and Maslows were turned out into the cold as ultra-Leftists. In their place were injected little cliques of characterless individuals—of whom Heinz Neumann is the perfected type—who are so little encumbered by spines that they can adjust themselves to a corkscrew if the ruling regime gives the necessary orders. The brief «Left» swing was followed by a deep and lasting swing to the Right which had such catastrophic results as the policies of the C. I. in the British miners and general strikes, in the Chinese revolution, and in Russian domestic affairs. It was the hey-day of the Bucharins, Peppers, Lovestones, Smerals, Roys, Martinovs, Tascas, etc.

In this period also, however, the Right-Centre bloc (Stalin-Bucharin) had to suffer the most biting lashes of criticism from the Bolshevik Opposition. Each compromise, each step away from the revolutionary road encountered the powerful obstacle of the detested «Trotskyists». Goaded on by the equally powerful Right wing, the Center collaborated with it in the Thermidorian act of cutting the Opposition from the Party. But with this act, the «equilibrium» was rudely upset, and the Center found itself confronted by even more outspoken demands of the Right on the one hand and growing pressure from the Russian workers on the other.

The Centrists calculated: Now that the Opposition is organizationally liquidated by expulsion, a swing to the Left will not only be in harmony with the mood of the proletarian masses, and bring no credit to the Opposition, but will unleash sufficient mass force to destroy the organizational power of the Right wing. Thus, the apparatus zig-zagged to the «Left», and instituted a period of spurious «Leftism» in the International which has lasted virtually since the Sixth Congress, and particularly since the Tenth Plenum.

But Stalin's «Leftism», induced by the pressure of the Opposition and its ideas that were permeating the workers, has no more essential resemblance to the platform of the Left Opposition than a delicate operation performed by a cobbler has to one executed by a master surgeon. Just as the latter tends to discredit the very institution of genuine surgery, Stalin's debacles only tend to discredit a genuine Bolshevik course. In other words, prostrated as the whole Comintern was by the pre-Sixth Congress regime, it has only been more severely struck by what followed. Loss of influence of the Communist Parties, loss of members, decline of the press—these are but some of the results of the «new line» in little more than a year, which cannot be concealed by all the screeching proclamations of Stalinism put together.

## The Change in the Russian Situation

Moreover, there has been a change in the Russian party situation. The «struggle» against the Right wing (Bucharin-Rykov-Tomsky) has been appreciably moderated since their temporarily inevitable «capitulation». The Center, which undertook the largely bureaucratic, apparatus-like, behind-the-scenes fight against the Right wing belatedly and with considerable timidity, is greatly relieved. It can now turn its attention more and more to crushing the ever-present «remnants of Trotskyism». It is, in fact, compelled to make this new turn because the necessities of the struggle against the Right wing unleashed social forces which threaten not only the Right wing but the Center itself: the most advanced sections of the working class and the basic layers of the peasantry. Thus, there is an increasing resistance among the workers to the bureaucratic measures taken by Stalin to deprive the workers' councils and the party nuclei in the factory from a decisive voice in management and the transfer of the latter prerogative to the technical and managerial staff. There is a movement among the poor peasantry for the formation of poor peasants league to combat the Kulak and «economically powerful» peasant effectively—a movement so strong that it was reflected high up in the apparatus in the demand for such organizations made months ago by Lominadze and Schatzkin, who borrowed the idea from the Opposition Platform of 1927.

All these «alarming» (for the Cen-

trist faction) symptom form the growing basis for a change in the present course in this direction. The principal, and most already enough indication to show that the dominant group is preparing to bear down in this direction, recent, is the speech of Manuilsky, the representative of the Comintern, to the Plenum of the Young Communist International. (Communist International, Vol. VI, No. 28). For the first time in almost two years, we have what amounts to a programmatic speech in which all the polemics of the speaker are directed, not against the Right, but against the «Left danger». Using the reports of the Y. C. I. itself, Manuilsky paints a picture of organizational and political decline in the International that is drearier than anything yet attempted by an Oppositionist.

«Comrade Furenberg», he says, «says that the decline is no less than 20 percent, and that these figures are a little out of date. Note that this decline is occurring in a situation of a rise in the revolutionary wave. Not in circumstances of a reaction, but in circumstances of a radicalization of the working youth. (Khitrov: The same applies in the Communist Parties.) Their turn is coming. We shall deal with the Comintern also.»

The attack is not only directed against the Y. C. I., but also against the sections (never the international leadership!) of the C. I. «On August 1st all our parties had big possibilities of showing their readiness to put this decision into force. In reality, with the exception of Greece and France, where was there any attempt to call a mass political strike on August 1st? In not one country did we see any serious attempts to carry out even a one-hour general strike.»

## Manuilsky Warns the Apparatus!

Further: «We have certain parties where the Central Committee has not taken a single step towards winning the masses, and it does not enter the head of any member of the party to demand of such a C. C. why the party directed by such a C. C. does not develop... Take the imperialist war which the bourgeoisie is organizing: when any general suffers a defeat, he is replaced; but we can lose half the membership of a party and the members of the C. C. remain in their posts.» (Foster, Bedacht and Co.—take heed of the warning!)

And the conclusions: «The Y. C. I. always struggled splendidly against the right-wing deviations, no one has any right to utter a word of reproach against you in that regard. But the struggle against the «left-wing» zig-zags was not so well carried out by you.»

To whom does Manuilsky refer? To Scatzkin, who at one time leaned towards the Trotsky Opposition, and together with Lominadze put forward the idea of poor peasants' unions; to Nasanov, who was recalled from China by Stalin a few years ago for signing the famous «Letter of Three Comrades from Shanghai» which criticized the C. I.'s Menshevik policy in the revolution along the lines of the Opposition. But not even these comrades are meant primarily; they are only the whipping boys for others to come. Manuilsky's (read: Stalin's) offensive against the so-called «Left deviation» in the Y. C. I. is the direct forerunner to an even stronger attack on the various sections of the C. I., which will initiate a swing from the present ultra-Left course all the way to the Right, just as definitely as the famous «Open Letter to the German Party», directed against Fischer-Maslow in 1924, was a step on the road to the alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek and Purcell.

The slogan of the Y. C. I. Plenum, under the aegis of Stalin's spokesman, was not Fire to the Right, but Fire to the Left. Chitarov, the head of the Y. C. I. has already written a programmatic article in Pravda which declares that the «main fire in the Youth» must be directed «against the Left».

In Czecho-Slovakia, the Political Bureau has adopted a decision which for the first time in more than a year not only mentions the «Left danger» but is directed essentially against it: «It (the C. I.) has condemned all along the line the false standpoint, injurious to the party, of this group (Fried), and has set the party the task of carrying out the inner-party struggle on two fronts: against the Right danger, which remains the main danger on an international scale as well as with us, and against the Left, exaggerated and sectar-

ian tendencies, which are dangerous because they balk and frustrate the struggle against the main Right danger.» This resolution is another harbinger. There is every reason to believe that «Fried groups», that is, scape-goats for Stalin's past policy will be discovered and officially condemned in virtually every party in the C. I.

## The Right Wing Approves

The central organ of the German Right wing, *Gegen den Strom*, devotes almost half of its entire issue to the «new change» and hails it as a justification of its whole line, criticizing it only because it is a «half-change» in the direction of the Brandler program. It writes: «We, the expelled «renegades», at all times adopted a standpoint in the questions touched on by Manuilsky which the Executive now suddenly claims for itself.» And, fearful of the disintegrating effects the new change will have in its ranks, it ends with the appeal: «Strengthening of the Opposition! Change from below and not command from above! A complete—and not a half change!»

That the American party will not escape the consequences of the new wind in the C. I. is to state a commonplace. Foster has just returned from across with the «new line» in his inside pocket and Go knows that he feels more at home with a course to the Right than he ever did or could while he gave obedient lip-service to the «Left» jag for which—constitutionally—he had no heart at all. The Party press may soon be expected to harp on a new string, to discover—by command—the danger from the Left, whose banner bearers may be found in either Joseph Zack, or Browder, or Amter, or any other convenient victim of the latest change.

## New Attitude towards Right Wing

The Party membership, which has been turned in the direction of sharp antagonism to the Lovestone faction, will be turned the other way just as arbitrarily, just as unexplained, just as mechanically and bureaucratically as it was last year when Lovestone was thrown out over night. A line of rapprochement towards the Right wing elements (ostensibly for the winning over of the rank and file) will be instituted. The first signs of this are not lacking, particularly in the needle trades where the Right wing is strong: For the first time since the official anti-Lovestone fight, the party fraction in the millinery workers' union just a few days ago nominated an expelled Lovestoneite for a position in the local—an absolutely inconceivable action two months ago!

That the whole Comintern needs a change from its present ultra-Leftist adventurism (with which Stalin is paying off his opportunist debts) to a Bolshevik line goes without saying. But Centrism cannot conduct such a change without inevitably swinging over to the camp of the Right wing. This is a fact taught every Communist by the experiences of the last six years. Unless the party membership compels a discussion of the basic causes for the present situation and adopts the proper measures for unifying the party on a correct revolutionary line, it will continue to remain bewildered by the renewed zig-zags and befuddled by its apparatus leaders who act only on command from the Stalin faction. Otherwise the newest «new line» will only worsen the chaos and disintegration of the movement.

After this article was written and just before going to press, we have been informed of even more definite steps by the American Stalinists in the direction of «conciliation» with the Lovestone group. At the last meeting of the general party fraction in the needle trades, some comrades objected to the fact that the party fraction nominated a number of expelled Lovestoneites for positions on the Executive Committee of the shop delegates Council of the N. T. W. I. U. Replying to the critics, who took seriously the diatribes of the *Daily Worker* against the «counter-revolutionary Lovestoneites», Rose Wortis and Joseph Burochovitch, leaders of the fraction declared that after the slate for the Council had been made up, Foster, «who has just returned from Moscow» instructed the fraction to put a number of Lovestoneites on the slate, which, therefore, had to be changed at the last minute. Needless to say the new line was not extended to the «Trotskyists» and our comrade Ber- man received 18 votes—practically all the non-party delegates, but not a single vote from the party fraction.