

A SQUEAK IN THE APPARATUS (A POPULAR EXPLANATION) OF RIGHTS AND LEFTS

By L. D. TROTSKY

In the March 30th Pravda there is an article by Yaroslavsky entitled "From Left to Right". The article is devoted to the "passage" of the Left Opposition... over into the camp of social democracy. How people, who for over two years have been jailed and exiled for "counter-revolutionary" activity, and even for "the preparation of an armed struggle against the Soviet government" (the official motivation for Trotsky's exile)—how these old time "counter-revolutionaries" can only now begin to "pass" into the camp of social democracy remains a puzzle. But what is clear is that Yaroslavsky still has to sweat at the task of finding a "scientific" explanation for Article 53 of the Criminal Code on the basis of which the Opposition has been persecuted. This search of an explanation takes on a particularly noisy character now, because there is a squeak in the apparatus, and it must be drowned.

It is no accident that it is Yaroslavsky who was let loose against the Opposition, even though there are more literate and wiser people in the Party. But at present, the more literate, the wiser, the more conscientious either do not want to be Yaroslavsky's yes-men, but still cannot, partly dare not speak their mind aloud, or else are simply confused. The Yaroslavskys are not confused, for there is nothing in them to be confused. This is why the defence of the Stalinist policy from the Opposition is taken on by Yaroslavsky, and he gives, let us note in passing, a remarkable example of the rot the Party is now fed on.

If in a way of exception we will this time stop at Yaroslavsky's article, it is because with all its insignificance it is symptomatic, and shows very well in what place, according to the German expression, Stalin's boot pinches.

The Tempo of Industrialization

Several months ago we wrote to the comrades in the U. S. S. R. that the signs indicating the too great speed of industrialization are multiplying. Quoting our Bulletin, Yaroslavsky writes that this evaluation "is absolutely in no way different from what the Mensheviks write". Absolutely in no way!

Yaroslavsky does not surmise that the question of correct or incorrect realistic or unrealistic tempos exists in itself independently of what the Mensheviks say about it and is decided in connection with material and organizational factors, and not newspaper quotations, all the more when these are falsified.

In the period when we Oppositionists fought for higher tempos of industrialization (1923-29), the bourgeois press of the whole world together with the social democratic, followed in the foot-steps of Stalin, repeating the accusation that the Oppositionists were "romanticists", "fanatics" and "super-industrialists".

In 1923-25 we proved that even after the exhaustion of all the pre-revolutionary means of production, Soviet industry will be able to have a 20% yearly growth. We supported this contention on economic considerations which we will not cite here (see "Whither Russia—Towards Capitalism or Towards Socialism", pp. 45-46, Russian edition). A year after that a five year plan was worked out in the womb of the Gosplan (State Planning Commission). According to this plan the development of industry was to proceed at the diminishing rate of speed, from 9% to 4% a year. The Opposition condemned this plan mercilessly. It was accused of "demagogy". Another year later the Politbureau approved a new five year project with a 9% yearly growth. The Fifteenth Party Congress approved the correctness of this rate and condemned the Opposition for "...non-belief" and "skepticism". This did not stop the Opposition from irreconcilably condemning the new five year plan. Another year and a half later the Gosplan finally worked out a third five year plan with a yearly increase of 29%. This growth coincided—much closer than it could be expected—with the hypothetical prognosis of the Opposition in 1925, and fully refuted all the preceding clamor about industrial romanticism and demagogy. Such is the brief pre-history of the question.

The actual growth of industry in the first year of the five year plan (1928-29), exceeded the plan, however, by fully 10%. The leadership immediately decided, basing itself on this success, to complete the five year plan in four years. Against this the

Opposition raised a voice of warning, this time from the "Right". What were our considerations?

a) It is impossible that there are no disproportions in the project of the five year plan. With the fulfilment of the plan they will accumulate, and may manifest themselves sharply, if not in the first year then in the second or third year of the plan which would result in the arrest of growth. Before industry takes on additional speed, we must, speaking in military terms, carefully examine all abutments or junctions, where all branches of industry interlap each other.

b) The noticeable depreciation of the quality of the products, which is extremely low as it is, is a great danger not only for the consumer but for industry as well, because industry itself is the chief consumer of products. Low quality must inevitably result in a drastic decline in the quantity of production.

c) The question of the tempos of industrial development must not be separated from the question of the living standards of the working masses, because the proletariat is the main producing force, and only the sufficient rise of the material and cultural standards of the proletariat can guarantee the future high tempos of industrialization. We consider this question of supreme importance.

These are the three chief considerations which prompted the Opposition to raise its warning cry against the reckless pursuit of tempos which replaced the economic lag of the preceding period. If in 1923-28 the Political Bureau of the Party, not understanding the tremendous possibilities inherent in nationalized industry and planned methods of production were ready to make peace with the idea of four or nine per cent of growth—then now, not understanding the material limits of industrialization it makes a light-minded jump from twenty to thirty per cent, adventurously attempting to transform each partial and temporary achievement into an absolute rule, and completely overlooking the interdependency of different phases of the industrial process.

When we call for the abandonment of the formal pursuit of quantity and for an actual improvement of quality—does this mean that we call for retreat from actually achieved successes? When we demand the utilization of a part of the accumulation for the actual needs of the workers—does this mean that we endanger the industrialization? When we demand that before the 30 per cent annual growth is turned into an iron law, we should examine the interrelation between the different branches of industry and national economy as a whole from the point of view of the productivity of labor, the production costs—does this mean that we call for a retreat to the Stalin position of yesterday?

If the question is really decided so simply then why should we stop at thirty per cent? Fifty per cent is still more. Whoever does not wish to pull "back" must inscribe on his banner at least seventy-five per cent. Or perhaps thirty percent is destined to be the rule? Destined by whom? Destined how? The unfortunate leaders simply arrived at this rule by running into it blindly in the first stages of carrying out the twenty per cent plan, which they themselves fought against tooth and nail for several years. Now it appears that only thirty per cent is Leninism. Whoever says to the frightened opportunists: do not lose your heads, do not push industry into a severe crisis—is, don't you see, "absolutely in no way different from the social democracy" absolutely, in no way!

Aren't these people jesters?

Collectivization

Matters fare still worse if possible with the peasant policy. For a number of years the Politbureau built its agrarian policy on the idolization of the mighty middle peasant and the individual peasant economy generally. The Kulak they simply did not notice or declared insignificant until he concentrated in his hands forty per cent of the marketable bread and acquired the leadership over the middle peasant in addition. Having created his own economic connections and channels the Kulak refused bread to the government industry.

After this (to be exact, after February 15, 1928) the belated and frightened leadership struck the Kulak with a hail of administrative repressions which immediately clogged the circulation of peasant commodities, practically liquidated the NEP and chased the middle peasant up into a blind alley.

When we say that this blind alley was the starting point of the new chapter in the collectivization we do not discover or invent anything new. We simply repeat what the official Soviet press has admitted many times. If Yaroslavsky wails that "not one reactionary has come to think of such an abominable explanation" it merely shows that being absorbed by the perusal of Oppositionist correspondence, the poor man does not read the economic articles in the Soviet press. Yaroslavsky is particularly agitated when we say that the middle peasants have been wavering between collectivization and civil war. He calls this remark "complete renegacy". (The vocabulary of this eavesdropper is not very rich.) But the whole Soviet press is full of information that the peasants, i. e., the middle peasants rapaciously exterminate and dispose of their live stock inventories. All the leaders call this situation "threatening". The newspapers explain this matter, by the influence of the Kulak. They certainly do not mean "ideological" influence but economic ties between the Kulak and the middle peasant, a certain interdependence of the whole peasant economy, market as well as of commodities and finances. In the wholesale selling of cattle as a mass phenomenon we have nothing else but a quiet sabotaging form of civil war. On the other hand, the movement of the farm Collectives (Kolkhoz) has a mass character also. Isn't it clear that the double nature of the middle peasant who combines within himself a toiler and a merchant has reached in the present stage the most contradictory expression? The middle peasant wavers between collectivization and civil war and to a certain degree combines one with the other. This is where the acuteness of the situation and its danger lies. It will increase ten fold if we do not understand it in time.

The Opposition Platform

In the years when three quarters of the Politbureau and 90 per cent of the government apparatus had their orientation on the "mighty peasant"—that is on the Kulak—the Opposition demanded energetic measures for agricultural collectivization. Let us recall that in the Platform of the Opposition these demands found the following expression

"To the growing 'farmer' tendencies of the village we must oppose a faster pace of collectivization. It is necessary to make systematic, year-in-and-year-out allowances to aid the poor peasants organized in collectives."

—(Platform of the Russian Opposition, page 24).

And further:

"We must invest greater means in the Sovkhoz and Kolkhoz (Soviet and collective farms). We must afford the maximum privileges to newly organized Kolkhozes and other forms of collectivization. No person deprived of electoral rights can be a member of a Kolkhoz. All the work of cooperation must be penetrated with the task of transferring small production into large-scale collectivized production. It is necessary to carry through a strictly class line in the supply of machinery particularly through a struggle with fraudulent machine-owning groups."

—(Platform of Russian Opposition, page 26.)

We did not pre-determine the tempo of collectivization because it was for us (it still remains so) a derivative proposition in relation to the tempo of industrialization and a series of other economic and cultural factors.

The Politbureau plan two years later outlined the collectivization of one fifth of the peasants during the Five Year Plan. We suppose this figure did not simply come to Kryzhanovsky in a dream but was based on technical and economic considerations. Was it so or not? Nevertheless during the first year and a half three-fifths of the peasantry were collectivized. Even if we should

assume that this swing of collectivization is a complete triumph of socialism we must simultaneously state the fact of the complete bankruptcy of the leadership because planned economy pre-supposes that the leadership foresees to a certain extent the basic economic processes.

Nevertheless there is not even a suggestion of that. Bucharin the new, the reconstructed, completely collectivized and industrialized Bucharin admits in the Pravda that the new stage of collectivization grew out of administrative measures in the struggle for bread and that this stage was not foreseen by the leadership "in all its concreteness". This is put not too badly. The mistakes of tempo they made in the considerations of planning amount all in all to one thousand percent. And in what sphere? Not in the production of thimbles but in the question of the socialist transformation of the whole of agriculture. It is clear that some of this "concreteness" Stalin and Yaroslavsky really did not foresee. Bucharin is right here.

As is well known we never suspected the present leadership of an over-abundance of penetrating ability. But it could never make this kind of mistake if collectivization would in reality have grown out of our conquering the conviction of the peasants by experience of the advantages of large scale collective economy over individual.

Collectivization and Adventurism

Of course we do not for a moment doubt the deeply progressive and creative significance of collectivization. We are ready conditionally to assume that in its scope it approximately corresponds to the sweep of the Five Year Plan. But where did the one thousand per cent additional success grow out of? That must be explained! Let us assume that the work of the Kolkhozes during the preceding twelve years was so successful that it could convince the whole peasantry, not only of the advantages but of the feasibility of general collectivization. It is clear that this kind of conviction could only be developed by means of Kolkhozes based on tractors and other machinery. It may be assumed that the overwhelming majority of the middle peasants actually recognizes today the advantages of working the land by the tractor. But from this, complete "tractorization" does not yet follow because we need not only the conviction of its advantages but the tractor itself. Did the authorities warn the peasants of the actual situation in the sphere of technical material possibilities generally? No! Instead of restraining a panicky collectivization, they extended it by their mad pressure. It is true that now in order to defend the mistake of the one thousand per cent tempo a new theory has been created making the question of technical resources one of tenth rate importance and claiming that socialist agriculture ("the manufacturing kind") can be created by catechism irrespective of the means of production. We are however, determined to reject this mystical theory. We do not believe in such a conception of socialism. Moreover we declare a merciless war against this mythology because the unavoidable disappointment of the peasants threatens to create severe reaction against socialism in general and this reaction may also embrace considerable circles of workers.

Stalin started his last retreat—the inevitability of which he foresaw on the eve of it just as little as he foresaw complete collectivization half a year earlier when he was busy with his trivial "theorizing" about the untimeliness of a socialist regime for the peasant poultry. The latest dispatches announce that Stalin has succeeded in marching a considerable distance—not forward (oh, wise Yaroslavsky!) but backward. From sixty per cent collectivization to forty per cent. We do not in the least doubt that he will still have to retreat a considerable percentage more—always at the tail end of the actual process. Foreseeing this several months ago—that is in the very heat of the collectivization push—we warned against the consequences of bureaucratic adventurism. If the Party had read our warnings as they truly were and not in the belated distortions of Yaroslavsky many mistakes would have been, if not avoided, at least greatly modified.

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