

NOTES of a JOURNALIST (Who Is Responsible for the «Turns»; Yakovlev's General Line) by ALFA

The Responsibility for the Turns Lies with . . . Trotskyism

It is known that the Opposition is pulling to the "Right", that it is against socialism and collectivization. It is no less known that the Opposition is for compulsory collectivization. And being that the selection and training of the apparatus, as is further well known, were in the past years in the hands of the Opposition, then with it, naturally, lies the responsibility for the turns. At any rate this is all they talk about in Pravda. If you do not like it, do not listen, but do not interfere with the "general line".

In the preceding issue we quoted the official Platform of the Opposition published in 1927 in regards to collectivization. But let us go 'way back of 1927, to the period of military Communism when civil war and famine necessitated a rigorous policy of bread requisitions. How did the Bolsheviks in those severe years paint the perspective of collectivization? In a speech devoted to the peasant uprisings on the ground of the requisitioning of bread, comrade Trotsky spoke on April 6, 1919:

"These uprisings gave us the possibility to realize our greatest ideological and organizational strength. But alongside of this, it is understood, the uprisings were also a sign of our weakness, because they drew into their wake not only the Kulaks but also—we must not deceive ourselves on this score—a certain part of the middle and intermediate peasantry. This can be explained by the general reasons which have been depicted by me—by the backwardness of the peasantry itself. We must not however, blame everything on the backwardness. Marx said on one occasion that a peasant not only has prejudice but also judgement, and one can appeal from the prejudice of the peasant to his judgement, to lead him towards a new order on the basis of experience. The peasantry should feel by deeds that in the working class, in its Party, in its Soviet apparatus, it has a leader, a defender; the peasant should understand the requisitions to which we were forced, should accept them as something unavoidable; he should know that we are entering into the internal life of the village, that we examine for whom it is easier, for whom it is more difficult, that we make an internal differentiation and seek the closest friendly bonds with the middle peasants.

"This we need first of all because as long as in Western Europe the working class has not gained power, as long as our Left flank cannot lean on the proletarian dictatorship of Germany, France and other countries, so long are we compelled to lean our Right flank on the Russian middle peasant. But not only in this period, no, also after the decisive, inevitable and historically pre-determined victory of the working class throughout Europe, for us, in our country, there will remain the important enormous task of the socialization of our agricultural economy, transforming it from a scattered, backward, peasant economy into a new, collective group, Communist economy. Can this greatest transition in world history be in any way completed against the desires of the peasantry? In no way. Not measures of violence will be needed here, not measures of compulsion, but educational measures, measures of influencing, of support, of good example, of encouragement—these are the methods by which the organized and enlightened working class speaks to the middle peasant." (L. Trotsky, Vol. XVII, pages 119-120).

Yakovlev's «General Line»

Every self-respecting bureaucrat has his "general line", sometime full of the unexpected. The "general line" of Yakovlev has always consisted of serving the command but winking to the Opposition. He ceased his winking when he understood that it is a serious matter, and for a responsible post the command demands not only the hands but the heart as well. Yakovlev has become people's commissar of agriculture. In this capacity he presented the Sixteenth Congress with a thesis on the collectivization movement. One of the basic reasons for the rise of agricultural economy, the thesis declares, is the "crushing of counter-revolutionary Trotskyism". It will therefore not hurt to recall how the present leader of the collectivization put the question of agricultur-

al economy in the very recent past, and in the struggle against that same Trotskyism.

Characterizing the dispersal and backwardness of peasant economy, Yakovlev wrote at the end of 1927: "These data are quite sufficient to characterize the drama of the small and tiniest economy. On the cultural and organizational level of peasant economy as inherited by us from czarism we will in no way succeed in advancing in the sphere of socialist development in our country with the necessary speed." (On the Question of Socialist Reconstruction of Agricultural Economy, edited by Yakovlev, page xxiv).

Two years ago when 75 percent of the collectives were as yet made up of the poor, the present commissar of agriculture, Yakovlev, evaluated their socialist character in the following manner:

"The question of the growth in the collectives of the communal and not individual elements of capital, even at the present time, perhaps particularly at the present time—is still a question of struggle; in many instances private individual accumulation hides under the communal form, etc." (Ibid, page xxxvii).

Defending against the Opposition the right of the Kulak to live and breath, Yakovlev wrote:

"The quintessence of the tasks is the socialist transformation of peasant economy into a cooperative socialist economy . . . precisely this small and tiny economy which middle peasant economy is at bottom. This is our basic and most difficult task. While solving this task we may in passing, by measures of economic and general policy, solve the task of limiting the growth of

Kulak exploiting elements—the task of an offensive against the Kulak." (Ibid p. xlv.)

Consequently, even the possibility of limiting the growth of the Kulak elements was made dependent by Yakovlev upon the solution "of the basic and most difficult task": the socialist transformation of peasant economy. As for the liquidation of the Kulak as a class, Yakovlev did not even raise the question. All this was two years ago.

Speaking of the necessity for the gradual transition from commercial cooperation to productive cooperation, that is, to collective farms, Yakovlev wrote: "This is the only road of cooperative development which really secures—naturally, not in one-two-three years, maybe not in one decade—the socialist reconstruction of all of peasant economy." (Ibid, page xii). Let us notice carefully: "not in one-two-three years, maybe not in one decade."

"Collective farms and communes," Yakovlev wrote in the same work, "are at the present time and will for a long time yet undoubtedly be only islets in the sea of peasant economy, since a pre-condition for their vitality is first of all a tremendous rise of culture." (Ibid, page xxxvii, our emphasis).

Finally, in order to present the basis for the perspective of decades, Yakovlev emphasized that:

"The creation of a mighty, rationally organized industry, capable of producing not only the means of consumption but also the means of production, which are imperative for national economy—this is the pre-condition for a real cooperative socialist plan." (Ibid, page xliii).

This is how matters appeared in re-

cent times when Yakovlev, in the capacity of a member of the Central Control Commission, exiled the Opposition to the East for an assault upon the rights of the Kulak and the bureaucracy, and for the endeavor to accelerate collectivization. In the struggle for the official course of that time, the course towards the "strong peasant", against the conscienceless and spiteful criticism on the part of the Opposition—the actual words in the article mentioned—Yakovlev considered that the collective farms "will for a long time yet undoubtedly be only islets"—not even islands, but islets!—"in the sea of peasant economy", for the socialist reconstruction of which "more than once decade will be needed. If two years ago, Yakovlev proclaimed, in contrast to the Opposition, that even the simple limitation of the Kulak can only be a passing result of socialist reconstruction of all of peasant economy in the course of a series of decades—then today, in the capacity of people's commissar of agriculture, he undertakes "to liquidate the Kulak as a class" in the course of two or three sowing campaigns. By the way—this was yesterday: today Yakovlev expresses himself in these much more enigmatically . . . and this sort of gentleman which is incapable of thinking anything through seriously, still less capable of foreseeing anything, accuses the Opposition of . . . "consciencelessness", and on the basis of this accusation arrest, exile and even shoot. Two years ago—because the Opposition pushed them on to the road of collectivization and industrialization; today—because it restrains the collectivizers from adventurism.

Here it is, the pure culture of bureaucratic adventurism.

The Right Wing Moves Closer to Social Democracy

Since the formation of organized Right wing groups in the Communist movement, we of the Left Opposition have contended that an independent existence for any length of time of a current in the labor movement that swings between Communism and social democracy is out of the question. We pointed out that the Right wing groups (Brandler, Lovestone, Sellier, Hais, etc.) were developing to a logical conclusion the theory of Stalin-Bucharin according to which a socialist society could be constructed on a national scale. We warned that all theoretical thought and historical experiences spoke for the idea that these Right wing groups must necessarily go the whole way to the organized social democracy, return to the Stalinist camp,—or so far as the workers in it are concerned—find in the program of the Left Opposition the only revolutionary solution of the crisis in our movement.

To dispute this at the present time is to turn one's back deliberately upon events and established facts. The recent period has produced a quantity of additional evidence to confirm our analysis.

A Heavy Defeat for Brandlerism

In Germany, the Right wing led by Brandler and Thalheimer has just suffered a crushing defeat in the Saxony elections. While the comrades of the Left Opposition—reserving their duty of criticism—carried on a campaign to have the Saxon workers vote for the Communist list, the Brandler group again sought to split the revolutionary ranks by setting up their own candidates. The result was that after weeks of boasting, the Brandlerites lost one-third of the votes cast for them at the 1928 Landtag elections. The demoralization subsequently created in the ranks of the Right wing is evident from a reading of the Brandler press itself. The Right wing workers, captivated by the fantastic ideas of Brandler and Thalheimer that the masses of Communist workers would swing along, were left speechless by the Saxony results.

The upshot is a thoroughgoing "revaluation of values" in the Brandler group. More outspoken voices are being heard for a second Party, or for unity with the Left social democratic splitters chipped off the parent body. The path adopted by the Brandlerites of moving away from the official Party—and from Communism—leads logically to the "advanced" step already taken by their French allies (Sellier, Dunois, Gelis & Co.), and further.

In France, as we have already reported, the Right wing has broken completely with

Communism. The Sellier group has organized a purely parliamentary "Workers and Peasants Party", adopting "legitimately" the Stalinist theories of such parties for the Orient. The absence of the very word "Communist" in their name is simply symbolic of the whole character of this movement. The policy of vacillating between the Communists and socialists, however, is very short-lived in France. Already, one of the leading members of the W.P.P. in France, Amedee Dunois, has formally joined the Socialist Party. That this new draft of Frossards will yield up many more than one Dunois to the S.P. is manifest to anybody that reads its journal, *Ca Ira*.

The Czech Right Wing Travels Fast

But the most striking instance of the flight to social democracy by the international Right wing is furnished by its Czecho-Slovakian section, one flank of which has formally joined the socialist party bag and baggage. We refer to the so-called "Brunn Opposition" led by Dr. Ecer and Kovanda. These eminent companions of Lovestone and Brandler have now "gone to the masses" in precisely the manner we foretold some time ago.

That is not all. The second partner in the Czech Right wing the trade unions led by Josef Hais which split away from the R.I.L.U. have now been formally brought into the Czech national reformist trade union federation, i. e., the Amsterdam International. Lovestone is not a bit put out by this open capitulation; on the contrary,

he greets it by writing (*Revolutionary Age*, No. 18):

"The campaign for trade union unity in Czecho-Slovakia has taken another step forward under the driving force of the Communist Opposition movement."

But why was this "unity" not realized with the Red trade unions, still containing some 50-60,000 members and affiliated with the R.I.L.U.? Since when must unity be achieved by capitulation to the yellow banner of Jouhaux and Co? No answer to this from Lovestone. The fact remains that confronted with the choice of unity with the revolutionary trade union center or with the Amsterdam center, Hais chose Amsterdam.

The international Right wing hails this as an achievement for their policy of trade union unity. And it is. Their policy of unity for its own sake results in practice in capitulation to reformism instead of the realization of the revolutionary united front. It is interesting to note, parenthetically, that Hais' treachery is too much for the stomach of at least one Right wing leader, Neurath, who does not deceive himself that the "unity" is a great step forward, but writes, in a bitter letter of reproach to Hais: "An unconditional amalgamation with the C.O.S. (reformist federation) would have the practical significance of the heaviest blow against the revolutionary proletariat of Czecho-Slovakia."

As for the third, "pure Opposition" group of the Right wing in Czecho-Slovakia, it has also contributed its quota to the social democratic party in the form of two of its leaders who, at the recent conference of the former, announced their formal retirement from Communism and return to the old, "solid", love-

Who Is Disintegrating and How?

Our reader will recall the announcement by Lovestone—made all the more vociferously because there were no facts to base it on—that "the Trotskyists are disintegrating". The events of recent months speak eloquently. They show who is really disintegrating, and where the particles are going. The Right wing is either capitulating to Stalin, as in Russia, or to the social democracy. The Left Opposition, denounced by Lovestone as "counter-revolutionaries"; "disintegrated Trotskyists" to which Lovestone now addresses hypocritical, humble and public appeals for a united front (and not-so-public appeals to and capitulatory negotiations with Musteite leaders), marches forward with renewed strength towards revolutionary unity. —S—n.

A Saslavsky Doesn't Change

One of the most loyal pillars of the Stalinist regime is the feature writer of *Pravda*, Saslavsky. When one reads how and what Saslavsky writes about counter-revolutionary Trotskyism, memories of 1917 rise to confront one. In those days Saslavsky wrote articles too, in fact quite similar ones, almost with the same words. Only not in *Pravda*. "Against the German agent, Lenin" was Saslavsky's motto then. Lenin demanded at that time that the masses be told of the kind of "knaves" the "Milukovs and Hessens, Saslavskys and Dans" are! Yes, Saslavsky has remained his old self. But what a threatening symptom that the hounding of Bolshevism can now be carried on by the same Saslavsky in the columns of *Pravda* only because he now writes "Trotsky" instead of "Lenin" and instead of "Bolshevism"—"Trotskyism"!