

NOTES OF A JOURNALIST -:-:-:- By ALFA

Two or Not Even One? (Blucher's Enigmatic Speech)

One of the first sessions of the Sixteenth Party Congress was greeted by the commander of the Far Eastern army, Blucher. This fact in itself has no political significance and would hardly deserve mention. Neither has the fact a Party significance: If, as a soldier, Blucher is far inferior to Budenny for instance, then in a Party sense he is very little superior to him. Besides Blucher's speech of greetings was edited beforehand in the office of Voroschilov and therefore very badly edited. But the spirit of the flunkey who falls in line at command was consistent to the end. There were the enraptured acclaim of Stalin and the ardent greetings to Voroschilov, and several jabs aimed at the Right wing before whom Blucher stood at attention only the day before. Everything is in order. There is also an interesting admission: "In the period between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses, our Party and Communist Youth organization in the army carried on a successful struggle against counter-revolutionary Trotskyism." The Fifteenth Congress, as was said in its day, drew the final balance under the "struggle against Trotskyism" and liquidated it completely. Now we hear from Blucher that "a successful struggle against Trotskyism" was carried on in the army for the last two and a half years, between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses. We must assume that at the Seventeenth Congress we will find out not a little of instructive value concerning the further course of this struggle which is no sooner ended than it starts anew. If we live—we shall hear about it.

But we have paused at Blucher's speech not because of this admission, nor because of its general tone, which can be expressed in three words: At your service! In this speech, or at any rate in the reports of it, there is one point which is of serious significance—not as a characterization of Blucher but as a characterization of what is now being done in the Party and what is what is now being done to the Party.

According to the report in Pravda of June 28, 1930, Blucher declared:

"We, the fighters in the Red Army, can proudly report to you that during these battles we did not have a single defection, not a single deserter to the enemy. The army showed a high political and class devotion to socialist construction."

Every revolutionist can only welcome this information. Unfortunately, however, we have a second version of this point in Blucher's speech which undermines all our confidence in the whole report. In the journal, Rabotchi, which is the daily organ of the Central Committee of the White Russian Communist Party, the quotation from Blucher's speech is reported as follows:

"We can proudly report to you that we had no defections nor a single deserter to the camp of the enemy. We have only two dark, shameful stains: two qualified recruits who were to serve for a period of nine months went over to the enemy. Both of them turned out to be Trotskyists."

The words we underlined are completely absent from the Pravda report. Were they spoken by Blucher or not? If we are to judge by the text we would have to conclude that these words were arbitrarily and incongruously inserted into the report after it was made, as a result of which we have an obvious absurdity. At first it says that there was not "a single deserter" and then it is reported that there were two of them. Obviously, there is something foul here: If there is not a single one, then where did the two come from? And if there really were two deserters then how can one say "not a single one"? But let us assume that it was not Blucher himself who made the ends meet: In the speech unfortunately, there is generally more ardor than sense. But then why did the Pravda report omit such tempting information about two deserters? Why did Pravda conceal the counter-revolutionary betrayals of the "Trotskyists"? If Pravda did not conceal anything, if Blucher did not even say this, then how is it that these

words appear on the same day in the Minsk Rabotchi?

We know well enough how all the information about the Congress is edited. Not a single line leaves the boundaries of the Congress without a visa from the Press Commission. This means that the information about the Trotskyist-deserters could never have been invented in Minsk. It had to be sent from Moscow with the seal of the Congress Press Commission. But then, once more, why were these lines omitted from Pravda? That is the first question.

There is also a second question. "Two qualified recruits went over to the enemy," we are told by Blucher or by somebody supplementing him. "Both of them turned out to be Trotskyists." These words are printed in the Minsk journal in bold face type. Naturally! But here is what is incomprehensible. Between the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Congresses, according to the words of Blucher, the army was completely purged of the remnants of Trotskyism. Why wasn't it purged of these two also? Evidently they were not known until the moment of their flight. How did Blucher find out that they were "Trotskyists", after they had fled? "Both of them turned out (?) to be Trotskyists." What does he mean "turned out"? How and on what point? The water is dark, so dark that it

A Reply To Comrade Weisbord

The speech of comrade Weisbord at the plenum of the Lovestone faction is significant as an example of a strong trend in the Communist movement to consider again the fundamental principle questions in dispute, and to draw closer to the Marxist standpoint of the Left Opposition. The recent adherence to our group of some of the best militants in the official Party, the winning of a section of the youth comrades who formerly followed the Lovestone group, and the present attitude of comrade Weisbord, for years a supporter of the Lovestone faction,—these are incontestable facts which demonstrate that the Left Opposition in the United States continues to be the rallying banner for ever-increasing numbers of revolutionary Communists.

They are facts which by themselves are sufficient answer to the pitiful declarations in the camp of the Right wing and the Centrists about our "disintegration", repeated solely for the purpose of retaining domination over militants whom the barrage of anti-"Trotskyism" alone has prevented from endorsing our views.

In this sense, the Communist League of America (Opposition) welcomes the statement of comrade Weisbord. At the same time, it is imperative to indicate some extremely serious defects in it, also typical of a certain confusion that exists in the ranks of many militants who are drawing closer to our point of view. It is not a question here of a number of relatively minor differences of opinion, which are quite admissible within the ranks of the Opposition itself. Nor do we raise the question of criticisms made by comrade Weisbord, which, in any case, can be discussed and solved on the basis of comradely argument and internal democracy. More fundamental questions are involved.

The Need for Clarity

The Communist League is the Left wing of the Communist movement, a faction fighting for the reconstitution of the Communist International on the unshakable foundations of Marx and Lenin which have been systematically undermined by Stalinism. As a faction, its base is necessarily narrower than that of the official Party and its requirements more stringent. Without wasting arguments on the philistine contentions of the Right wing concerning our alleged "sectarianism" (i. e., our insistence upon revolutionary principle), we must establish at all costs a thorough clarity in all fundamental problems of the movement, since without that it is impossible to point the correct road for the movement and help the revolutionary workers in and around the Communist Party tread this road by unloading their artificially appointed "leaders" and their baggage of pernicious theories. That is why, particularly in the case of Weisbord, a com-

rade who has occupied prominent posts in the work of American Communism and is not in the same position as a new-comer or rank and file worker in the movement, all unclarity and confusion must be energetically opposed.

They exist in Weisbord's views on the problems of the Indian and Chinese revolutions and the relations of the various groups in the movement. What comrade Weisbord entirely fails to see in connection with the guerilla warfare in China is the character of the period. It is not a question of "right" or "wrong" in the Chinese guerilla warfare, but of what period we are experiencing in China. Neither Stalinism nor the Lovestones recognize that their Menshevik policies during 1925-27 led to the victory of counter-revolution, the recession of the revolutionary wave, and the virtual decapitation of the Communist movement.

Because they consider the defeat of the Chinese revolution as a passing or already passed "episode", the policy of putschism is systematically advocated or condoned by them. They fail to see the need, particularly now in a period of depression of the workers, of re-awakening them, re-grouping them by means of democratic slogans, centering around the demand for a Constituent Assembly. At the same time this cheap "Leftism" is supplemented by the outright Menshevik perspective of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry", i. e., a new Kuo Min Tang scandal, a new Kerenskyism.

It is these questions of strategical and tactical significance that must be decided in the Chinese revolution. Only by establishing a sound foundation on them can the present guerilla warfare be estimated correctly, in its proper place, and not in the ambiguous manner into which comrade Weisbord falls.

An Ambiguous Position on India

The same ambiguity exists in Weisbord's words on India. Side by side with perfectly correct formulations are to be found perfectly confused ones, particularly on the relations of the proletarian movement with the national bourgeoisie. The primary problem of the Indian revolution is not one of an alliance with the national bourgeoisie, but of how to shatter every bit of faith of the masses in that leadership, how to make them rely upon themselves exclusively, to drive the national bourgeoisie (Ghandism in all shades) relentlessly out of the movement. The native bourgeoisie is the principal brake on the popular masses; it is the last and most substantial prop of British imperialism in India.

The economic and political needs of
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We do not know who fell into this fit of babbling: Blucher, or the editor of his speech, or both of them. But it is clear that somebody here fell into a fit of babbling exceeding the most exceptional norms of verisimilitude. That is why Pravda refused to print these words. It was decided there, and not without cause, that this is too stupid. But at the same time the Press Commission of the Congress was reluctant to throw them out: maybe somebody will find some use for them. And really—such an alluring morsel: On the one hand, not a single deserter, which is such an excellent testimonial to the army. On the other hand, fully two deserters, and both of them "Trotskyists"; and this is still better, for it reveals the direct connection between the Opposition and Chiang Kai-Shek. A pity to throw it out: Perhaps it will come in handy in Minsk.

In conclusion, there still remains to take a look at the composition of the Press Commission. It includes the former Social Revolutionists, Berdnikov, who is prepared for any service; Stalin's former secretary, Nazaretian, who has quite a distinct and well-earned reputation; the former Menshevik, Popov, who supplements Berdnikov; the chief cook of the Bureau of Party History, Savillev; and Stalin's former secretary, Tovstukha. This ought to be enough for anybody.

The Sermon on Cockroaches

In his concluding remarks, Stalin spoke about how Rykov, Bucharin and Tomsky became frightened as soon as "a cockroach stirred somewhere, before it even crawled out of its hole". . . . The speech evidently referred to the dissatisfied Kulaks and middle peasants. Further on, however, the above-mentioned cockroach turns out to be "feeble and moribund". This complicates matters somewhat. It may be that a feeble cockroach can stir, but so far as a moribund cockroach is concerned—we would say frankly that we have our doubts. We are quite in accord with the moral that even live cockroaches should not be feared. But on the other hand we assume that under no circumstances should a cockroach be called a raisin, as an economical father once did when a baked cockroach was discovered in his bread. Nevertheless, some people—"economists" if not "economical"—believed and taught others, beginning with 1924, that the Kulak is a myth altogether, that socialism can very well be reconciled with that "powerful middle peasant"—in a word, for four years they ardently converted the cockroach into the raisin of national socialism. This too should have been avoided.

A Self-Portrait of Yaroslavsky

The irreplaceable colleague, Yaroslavsky, in the interests of self-criticism, read at the Congress a description of a Communist given by a certain organization in a forsaken locality: "Consistent, politically literate, has no firm convictions of his own. Awaits what other will say." The report records "laughter". But if one stops to think, it is not at all a laughing matter. It is only too true. And maybe this is precisely why it is so ludicrous. The province has hit the mark, describing not a man but a type.

Yes, even if we take this same Yaroslavsky. In 1923, he wrote panegyrics to Trotsky. In 1925, he wrote agreeing with Zinoviev's "Leninism", which was directly entirely against Stalin. In 1927, he wrote that Bucharin has no deviations whatever and that he is educating the youth in the spirit of Leninism.

But can it be said that Yaroslavsky is inconsistent? Nobody will say that. He is quite consistent, even too consistent. Politically illiterate? No, of course not. At worst—he is semi-literate. Has he his own firm convictions? It appears that he has not. But why should convictions be firm? They are not metallic. But how is it that Yaroslavsky, without firm convictions, maintains himself at the top? Very simple. He "awaits what others will say".

No, the Congress laughed for nothing. The description fits perfectly.