

# STALIN AS A THEORETICIAN

(Continued from Last Issue)

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The above-mentioned unfavorable balance of the October revolution for the village is, of course, temporary and transitory. The principal significance of the October revolution for the peasant lies in the fact that it created the pre-conditions for the socialist reconstruction of agriculture. But this is a matter of the future. In 1927, collectivization was still completely tabooed. So far as "complete" collectivization is concerned, nobody even thought of it. Stalin however, includes it in his considerations after the fact. "Now, after the intensified development of the collectivization movement"—our theoretician transplants into the past what lies ahead in the future—"the peasants are able . . . to produce a lot more than before with the same expenditure of labor". And after this, once more: "How can one say, after all this (!) that the October revolution did not bring any gain to the peasant? Is it not clear that people saying such nonsense are obviously telling lies about the Party and the Soviet power?" The reference to "nonsense" and "lies" is quite in place here, as may be seen. Yes, some people "are obviously telling lies" about chronology and common sense.

Stalin as we see, makes his "nonsense" more profound by depicting matters as if the Opposition not only exaggerated the February revolution at the expense of the October, but even for the future refused the latter the capacity for improving the conditions of the peasant. For what fools, may we ask, is this intended? We beg the pardon of the honorable professor Pokrovsky!

## The Aim of the Opposition

Incessantly advancing, since 1923, the problem of the economic scissors of the city and village, the Opposition pursued a quite definite aim, now incontestable by anyone: To compel the bureaucracy to understand that the struggle against the danger of disunity can be conducted now with sugary slogans like "Face to the village", etc., but through: a) faster tempo of industrial development; and b) energetic collectivization of peasant economy. In other words, the problem of the scissors as well as the problem of the peasants' balance of the October revolution was advanced by us not in order to "discredit" the October revolution—what is the very "terminology" worth!—but in order to compel the self-contented and conservative bureaucracy by the whip of the Opposition to utilize those immeasurable economic possibilities which the October revolution opened up to the country.

To the official kulak-bureaucratic course of 1923-1928, which had its expression in the every day legislative and administrative work, in the new theory, and above all, in the persecution of the Opposition, the latter opposed, from 1923 on, a course towards an accelerated industrialization, and from 1927 on, after the first successes of industry, the mechanization and collectivization of agriculture.

Let us once more recall that the Opposition platform which Stalin conceals, but from which he fetches in bits all of his wisdom, declares: "The growth of private proprietorship in the village must be offset by a more rapid development of collective farming. It is necessary systematically and from year to year to subsidize the efforts of the poor peasants to organize in collectives." (Page 68, English edition). "A much larger sum ought to be appropriated for the creation of Soviet and collective farms. Maximum indulgences must be accorded to the newly organized collective farms and other forms of collectivization. People deprived of elective rights cannot be members of the collective estates. The whole work of the cooperatives ought to be penetrated with a sense of the problem of transforming small-scale production into large-scale collective production. The work of the land distribution must be carried on wholly at the expense of the state, and the first thing to be taken care of must be the collective farms and the farms of the poor, with a maximum protection of their interests." (Page 71.)

If the bureaucracy had not vacillated under the pressure of the petty bourgeoisie, but had executed the program of the Opposition since 1923, not only the proletariat but also the peasant balance of the revo-

lution would be of an infinitely more favorable nature.

## The Problem of the «Scissors»

The problem of the "smytchka" (alliance) is the problem of the mutual relations between city and village. It is composed of two parts, or, more correctly, can be regarded from two angles: a) the mutual relationship between industry and agriculture; b) the mutual relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry. On the basis of the market, these relations, assuming the form of commodity exchange, find their expression in the price movement. The harmony between the prices of bread, cotton, beets and so forth on the one hand and calico, kerosene, plows and so forth on the other hand, is the decisive index for evaluating the mutual relations between the city and the village, of industry and agriculture, between workers and peasants. The problem of the "scissors" of industrial and agricultural prices therefore remains, for the present period as well, the most important economic and social problem of the whole Soviet system. Now how did the price scissors change between the last two congresses, that is, in the last two and a half years? Did they close, or, on the contrary, did they widen?

We look in vain for a reply to this central question in the ten hour report of Stalin to the Congress. Presenting piles of departmental figures, making a bureaucratic reference book out of the principal report, Stalin did not even attempt a Marxist generalization of the isolated and, by him, thoroughly undigested data given to him by the commissariats, secretariats and other offices.

Are the scissors of industrial and agricultural prices closing? In other words, is the balance of the socialist revolution, as yet passive for the peasant, being reduced? In the market conditions—and we have not yet liberated ourselves from them, and will not for a long time to come—the closing or widening of the scissors is of decisive significance for an evaluation of the successes accomplished and for checking up on the correctness or incorrectness

## Four New Organs of the Left Opposition

We are proud to announce the publication of four new organs by the International Left Opposition, solid proofs of the forward march of our movement in the face of all obstacles put in its path by Stalinism, and a refutation of all the fantastic tales concerning our "disintegration".

The first is the "International Bulletin of the Left Communist Opposition" printed in Paris by the Provisional International Secretariat of the Opposition. The first number, just received here, is printed in French and German, and contains the following material: An Appeal to the Proletarians of the World. Editorial Notice. List of Organizations Adhering to the International Conference of the Opposition. The Left Opposition and the Party in Germany. The Crisis in the Belgian Opposition. (Resolutions of the Charleroi Federation and the Executive Bureau). The Development of the Opposition in France. The Conditions of the Oppositionists Deported in the U.S.S.R. What is the Situation in the Austrian Opposition movement? Future issues will contain articles in English translation also. The price per copy is 5 cents, to be purchased through the Militant.

The second is "Claridad", published by the Mexican Opposition. The first number contains the following articles in the Spanish language: An Address to the Mexican Communists. The Expulsion of Andres Nin from the U.S.S.R. The Recent "Revolutions" in South America. A. Marti Arrested in Nicaragua. The Opportunists of Transport Workers Confederation and the Government. The Crisis in the U.S. Communist Party. The Situation in Cuba. The Expulsion of comrade Golod from the Spanish-speaking section of the U.S. Party. And many more other important items. Copies of "Claridad" can be purchased in the United States at 5 cents each by writing A. Gonzalez, 25 Third Avenue, Room 4, New York, N.Y.

The third is "Spartacus", monthly or-

gan of economic plans and methods. That there is not a word about it in Stalin's report is of itself an extremely alarming fact. Were the scissors closing, there would be plenty of specialists in Mikoyan's department who would, without difficulty, give this process statistical and graphic expression. Stalin would only have to demonstrate the diagram, that is, show the Congress a scissors which would prove that the blades are closing. The whole economic section of the report would find its axis, but unfortunately this axis is not there. Stalin avoided the problem of the scissors.

The domestic scissors is not the final index. There is another, a "higher" one: the scissors of domestic and international prices. They measure the productivity of labor in Soviet economy with the productivity of labor in the world capitalist market. We received from the past, in this sphere as well as in others, an enormous heritage of backwardness. In practice, the task for the next few years is not immediately to "catch up with and outstrip"—we are unfortunately still very far from this!—but planfully to close the scissors between domestic and world prices, which can be accomplished only through systematically approximating the labor productivity in the U.S.S.R. to the labor productivity in the advanced capitalist countries. This in turn requires not statistically-minimum but economically-favorable plans. The oftener the bureaucrats repeat the bold formula "to catch up with and outstrip", the more stubbornly they ignore exact comparative coefficients of socialist and capitalist industry or, in other words, the problem of the scissors of domestic and world prices. And on this question also not a word is to be found in Stalin's report. The problem of the domestic scissors could have been considered liquidated only under the conditions of the actual liquidation of the market. The problem of the foreign scissors—with the liquidation of world capitalism. Stalin, as we know, was preparing, at the time of his agricultural report to send the N.E.P. "to the devil". But he changed his mind within the six months that elapsed. As is always the

case with him, his unaccomplished intention to liquidate the N.E.P. is attributed by him in his report to the Congress to the "Trotskyists". The white and yellow threads of this operation are so indiscreetly exposed that the report of this part of the speech does not dare to record the slightest applause.

What happened to Stalin with regard to the market and the N.E.P. is what usually happens to empiricists. The sharp turn that took place in his own mind under the influence of external pressure, he took for a radical change in the whole situation. Once the bureaucracy decided to enter into a final conflict with the market and the Kulak instead of its passive adaptation to them, then statistics and economy could consider them non-existent. Empiricism is most frequently the pre-condition for subjectivism, and if it is bureaucratic empiricism, it inevitably becomes the pre-condition for periodic "turns". The art of the "general" leadership consists in this case of converting the turns into smaller turns and distributing them equally among the helots called executors. If, at the end, the general turn is attributed to "Trotskyism", then the problem is settled. But this is not the point. The essence of the N.E.P., regardless of the sharp change in the "essence" of Stalin's thoughts about it lies as before in the determination by the market of the economic inter-relationships between the city and village. If the N.E.P. remains then the scissors of agricultural and industrial prices remain the most important criterion of the whole economic policy.

## A «Bourgeois Prejudice»

However, half a year before the Congress, we heard Stalin call the theory of the scissors a "bourgeois prejudice". This is the simplest way out of the situation. If you tell a village quack that the temperature curve is one of the most important indices to the health or illness of an organism, he will hardly believe you. But if he grasps some sage words and, to make matters worse, learns to present his quackery as "proletarian medicine", he will most certainly say that a thermometer is a bourgeois prejudice. If this quack has power in his hands he will, to avoid a scandal, smash the thermometer over a stone or, what is still worse, over somebody's head. In 1925, the differentiation within the Soviet peasantry was declared to be a prejudice of panic-mongers. Yakovlev was sent to the central statistical department, from which he took away all the Marxist thermometers to be destroyed. But unfortunately, the changes in temperature do not cease when there are no thermometers. But for that, the appearance of hidden organic processes takes the healers and those being healed unawares. This is what happened in the grain strike of the Kulak, who unexpectedly appeared as the leading figure in the village and compelled Stalin, on February 15, 1928 (see Pravda of that date) to make a turn of 180 degrees. The price thermometer is of no less significance than the thermometer of differentiation within the peasantry. After the Twelfth Party Congress, where the term "scissors" was first used and explained, everybody began to understand its significance. In the three years that followed, the scissors were invariably demonstrated at the Plenums of the Central Committee, at Conferences and Congresses, as precisely the basic curve of the economic temperature of the country. But afterwards, they gradually began to disappear from usage, and finally, at the end of 1929, Stalin declared them to be . . . "a bourgeois prejudice". Because the thermometer was smashed in time, Stalin had no reason to present the Sixteenth Congress of the Party with the curve of economic temperature. Marxist theory is the weapon of thought serving to clarify what has been, what is becoming, and what lies ahead, and for the determination of what is to be done. Stalin's theory is the servant of bureaucracy. It serves to justify zig-zags after the event, to conceal yesterday's mistakes and consequently to prepare tomorrow's. The silence over the scissors occupies the central place in Stalin's report. This may appear paradoxical, because silence is an empty place. But it is nevertheless a fact: in the center of Stalin's report is a hole, consciously and premeditatedly bored.

Awaken, so that no harm shall come to the dictatorship out of this hole!

(To Be Continued)

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