

Molotov's Prosperity in Knowledge

Among other pearls presented by Molotov to the Sixteenth Congress, there is the following thought, nay, a whole web of thoughts:

"It is worth recalling in this connection some of Trotsky's declarations made several years ago. Trotsky contended more than once, that 'since the imperialist war in Europe no development of the productive forces has been possible! (L. Trotsky, Europe and America, 1926), that to Europe's share remains only 'absolute stagnation and dismemberment' (L. Trotsky, Five Years of the Comintern). This did not prevent (!) the 'Left' Trotsky from becoming later on (!) the bard of American prosperity. In reality, his speeches about the fact that America would put Europe on 'rations' were a peculiar re-singing (?) of the theory of 'exceptionalism' which afterward (!) became the fundamental basis of the Right wing renegades in the American Communist Party. In this instance, too, Trotsky, under 'Left' phrases, dragged a thoroughly Right opportunist line hostile to the Comintern." (Pravda, July 8, 1930).

Please note the tenor of Molotov's thoughts. Trotsky contended several years ago that Europe is confronted with stagnation and decline. "This did not prevent the 'Left' Trotsky from becoming later on the bard of American prosperity." Why should this particularly have "prevented Trotsky?" Does Europe's stagnation exclude the development of America? On the contrary, it was precisely the growing might of the United States that I connected with Europe's stagnation. In one of the reports on this subject, I said:

"The unparalleled economic superiority of the United States, even independent of the conscious policy of the American bourgeoisie, will not permit the rise of European capitalism. American capitalism, driving Europe ever further into an impasse, will automatically drive it to the road of revolution. This contains the most important key to the world situation." (L. Trotsky, Europe and America, page 64).

What is the meaning of the so-called contradiction of which Molotov attempts to accuse me? It means that our accidental theoretician is always disposed to "enter with both feet" into some kind of a periodical mess.

Insofar as Europe is concerned, I was not alone in saying after the war that all the roads of development are closed to European capitalism—this same thought is expressed in all the basis document of the Comintern: in the manifesto of the Second Congress, in the programmatic thesis on tactics of the Third Congress, in the resolution of the Fourth Congress, and repeated by the Fifth Congress (when in some respects it was already incomplete). In the broad historical sense, this contention is true even today. If Europe's production is now about 113 percent of the pre-war figure, it means that the per-capita income of the adult population did not grow in the sixteen years, and for the toilers—it decreased. In the report to which Molotov refers, I said: "European capitalism has become reactionary in the absolute sense of the word, that is, not only does it not lead the nation forward but it is even incapable of retaining for it the standard of living it reached the past. This is the economic basis of the present revolutionary epoch. Political ebb and flow develop on this basis but do not change it." (Europe and America, page 72).

Or perhaps Molotov disputes this thought?

It is doubtless that Europe rose out of the destruction and decline of the first post-war years, and for the second time straightened out after the convulsions of the Ruhr occupation. This became possible, however, only because of the continuous chain of defeats of the European proletariat and the colonial movements. When, a day after the war, or in 1925, in foreseeing great social struggles in England or a revolutionary situation in China, we spoke of the inextricable position of European imperialism, we naturally made the point of departure in our calculations the victory of the proletariat, and not its defeat. At that time we did not really foresee the exploits of Stalin-Molotov in England, China, as well as in other countries. At any rate, not to their full extent. And there is no doubt—this is in no way a paradox—that Stalin and Molotov did more than all the statesmen of Europe to preserve and stabilize, to save European capitalism. Naturally, against their own will.

But this does not improve matters.

What does it mean to be the "bard" of American prosperity? America has the advantage over Europe which a big monopoly trust has ever dispersed, middle and small enterprises competing among themselves. To point out this advantage and to reveal its tendencies, does not mean to become a "bard" of trusts. By the way, the petty bourgeois dough-heads more than once called the Marxists the "bards" of big capitalist enterprise.

Molotov, however, forgets that the Fifth Congress of the Comintern simply overlooked America, while the Sixth Congress included in the program a note on this same correlation of America and Europe which Stalin attempted so helplessly to deny. Molotov recalls the rations. Even this prognosis is borne out at every step. What is the Young plan if not a financial ration? And didn't America put the British Navy on a ration? This is only a beginning.

Molotov himself finally came to the thought, (or maybe he was prompted) that "by the Kellogg Pact, she (America) strives to make the decision of the question of the future imperialist war dependent upon its will." Even though not an original admission, nevertheless a valuable one. But this means precisely that America is striving (and in part succeeds) to put European imperialism on rations. By the way: if this is the objective significance of the Kellogg Pact—and this is just what it is—how it is that Stalin and Molotov dared to adhere to it?

In 1924, in the report on "Europe and America" (this is just the report Molotov has in mind) we said, in connection with the naval rivalry between the United States and Great Britain: "But we must add: when England's position becomes such that it must openly accept the American ration, it will not be done directly by Lord Curzon—he will not do, he is too proud—no, this will be entrusted to MacDonald. . . . Here the pious eloquence of MacDonald, Henderson, the Fabians, will be required in order to press on the English bourgeoisie and persuade the English workers, 'What, then, shall we go to war with America? No, we are for peace, for agreement.' And what does agreement with Uncle Sam mean? To go on rations—this is the only agreement, there is no other. And if you do not want to—then prepare for war." (L. Trotsky, Europe and America, page 30-31).

It so happens that in politics, no matter how artful, some things can be foreseen. Molotov very deeply despises such an occupation. He prefers not to see even what is happening before his very nose.

Further: why did Molotov drag in "prosperity"? In order to reveal his own education? We readily believe that after the designation of Molotov to the post of leader of the Comintern, tongues of flame came down to him, as happened at one time to the apostles, after which he immediately began to talk in unknown languages. But "prosperity" is nevertheless irrelevant. Prosperity has a conjunctural significance and means flourishing, in the sense of a commercial-industrial ascent. But my comparison of America and Europe was based upon fundamental economic indices (national wealth, income, mechanical power, coal, oil, metal, etc.) and not on the conjunctural fluctuations of those indices. Molotov evidently wants to say: Trotsky glorified the might of America, and yet, look, the United States is going through the most acute crisis. But does a crisis deny capitalist might? Didn't England, in

the epoch of its world hegemony, know crises? Is capitalist development in general conceivable without crises? Here is what we said on this score in the Criticism of the Program of the Comintern:

"We cannot enter into a consideration of the problem of the time of the American crisis and its possible depth. This is not a question of program but of conjuncture. For us, of course, the inevitability of a crisis is absolutely unquestionable and, considering the present world expansion of American capitalism, its great depth and sharpness is not excluded. But the efforts to minimize or weaken the importance of North American hegemony on this ground is not justified by anything, and can only lead to most profound errors of a strategical character. On the contrary, in a critical epoch the hegemony of the United States will prove even more complete, more open, more ruthless, than in the period of boom. The United States will try to overcome and get out of its difficulties and helplessness primarily at the expense of Europe. . . ." (Page 10, American Edition).

Further on, we expressed regret that "this trend of thought has found absolutely no expression in the draft program of the Comintern" (Page 11).

It so happens that in economics as well as in politics—even to a greater extent than in politics—some things can be foreseen. But we already know: Molotov does not care for this frivolous occupation.

A few words remain to be said on the concluding part of the web of Molotov's thoughts: Trotsky's views in regard to America's placing Europe on rations were, don't you see, a "peculiar re-singing (?) of the theory of exceptionalism which afterwards (!) became the fundamental basis of the Right wing renegades in the American Communist Party." (What kind of a re-singing is that which comes before the melody itself? But let us not be severe with Molotov the orator and author: we are occupied here with the thinker).

The "Right wing renegades"—are Lovestone and Co., who, back, in 1924 were already tired of criticizing my views on the inter-relationships of America and Europe. Here Molotov has actually given us nothing but a re-singing. The theory of exceptionalism, or peculiarities, was really given its most consummate and reactionary expression by Stalin and Molotov who, in 1924, announced to the whole of humanity that in contrast to all the other countries of the world, the U. S. S. R. has the possibility of constructing socialism within its national boundaries. If we take into consideration that the whole historical mission of our Party is the construction of socialism, it may be said that from the viewpoint of this task the exceptionalism of the U. S. S. R. has according to Stalin, an absolute character. No matter what exceptionalism was sought for the United States by Lovestone and Co., it could not be higher than the one Stalin secured for the U. S. S. R. by the decrees of the Comintern.

Further: Didn't the program of the Comintern nevertheless recognize the world capitalist hegemony of the United States? Neither Greece nor Belgium nor a number of other countries possess this "small" peculiarity. Aren't we therefore correct in saying that the world hegemony of the United States represents its exceptional peculiarity? Or perhaps Molotov has arrived at a refutation of the program of the Comintern which was written by Bucharin several months before he was declared a bourgeois liberal?

"Trotsky drags an opportunist line under Left phrases." In what sense is the statement of the world domination of the United States a "phrase" and just why is it a "Left" phrase? It is quite impossible to understand anything. Instead of thoughts, —a sort of rotted chaff. No matter what you touch, it crumbles.

But the whole point is that after the Soviet Union is abstracted theoretically from the rest of humanity, Molotov demands that all the rest of the countries should give up pretensions of peculiarities, and even more, at exceptionalism. And indeed, would it be easy to direct half a hundred Communist Parties if, relying upon peculiarities, they would refuse to step forward simultaneously with the Left foot of Molotov's command? After all, one must sympathize with a leader. . . .

In the article "Two Conceptions" (see The Militant, Vol III, No. 19 and 20), we showed in detail the whole inconsistency of Stalin's (and that means Molotov also) understanding of internationalism. The opportunism of Lovestone, Brandler and their partisans lies in the fact that they demand the recognition for themselves of those national socialist rights which Stalin considers a monopoly of the U. S. S. R. It is not for nothing that these gentlemen carried through the whole campaign against "Trotskyism" shoulder to shoulder with Molotov. And this campaign embraced, more or less, all the questions of Communist world outlook. Even now, Lovestone declares that what divides him from the Comintern leadership are tactical differences, but from the Left Opposition—besides tactical — also programmatic and theoretical differences. And this is absolutely true.

That America's position is exceptional will not be denied even by the valorous Czech soldier, Schwejk who, it is said, has become a fellow champion of Smeral. But Lovestone's national opportunism does not in the least flow from this exceptionalism. The basis of this opportunism is the program of the Comintern which speaks of the world hegemony of the United States, that is, of its exceptionalism, but does not draw any revolutionary conclusions because it does not speak of the inseparable bond between American "exceptionalism" and the "exceptionalism" of the other parts of the world. Here is what our criticism of the program says on this score:

"On the other hand, it has been left entirely unmentioned—and this is the least important phase of the same world problem—that it is precisely the international strength of the United States and its unbridled expansion resulting from it, that compels it to include powder magazines throughout the world among the foundations of its structure—the antagonisms between the east and west, the class struggle in old Europe, uprisings of the colonial masses, wars and revolutions. This on the one hand transforms United States capitalism into the basis counter-revolutionary force in the present epoch, becoming constantly more interested in the maintenance of order in ever corner of the globe, and on the other hand prepares the ground for a gigantic revolutionary explosion of this already dominant and still increasing world imperialist power." (Page 9, American edition).

If Molotov does not agree with this, let him object. We are ready to learn. But instead of analytical objections, he presents us with his own declaration of his prosperity in knowledge, which has not, however, been proved as yet. And in general, it occurs to us that it is in vain that Molotov mortifies the flesh with knowledge. Even Ecclesiastes said: "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." —T.

THE LATEST PAMPHLET BY COMRADE LEON TROTSKY

The Turn in the Communist International and the German Situation

JUST WRITTEN : : JUST PUBLISHED



A keen analysis of the latest turn in policy of the present leadership of the Communist International in connection with an examination of the results of the recent elections in Germany. Comrade Trotsky reveals the relationship of forces between the proletariat, the big and small bourgeoisie, and their political parties, and presents the perspectives for the great dilemma in Germany: Communism or Fascism.

10 cents a copy : : 7 cents in bundles.

Order Now From
THE MILITANT
25 Third Avenue New York, N. Y.