

THE SUCCESSES OF SOCIALISM AND THE DANGERS OF ADVENTURISM

By LEON TROTSKY

We have always emphasized the universal and historical importance of the experiences and the economic successes of the U. S. S. R., and it would be a superfluous repetition on our part to emphasize it here once more. Nothing better reveals today the striking degradation of the world social democracy than its openly manifested desire to make the U. S. S. R. return to the path of capitalism, as well as its active political solidarity with the imperialist conspirators and the bourgeois saboteurs. Nothing better characterizes the cowardice and the vileness of the ruling classes of bourgeois society, the social democracy included, than their protestations against forced labor in the U. S. S. R. at a time when the clerk of the hereditary slave-owners, MacDonal, with the aid of the Second International, is oppressing three hundred millions in India and keeping the Hindu people in colonial servitude. Can the comparison be made for one instant between the scurrilous of the "coalition" or "oppositional" social democracy and the gigantic work which the people roused up by the October revolution is accomplishing towards a new life?

That is precisely why we Marxists are obliged to put the working class of the whole world on guard with special force and insistence against the dangers that are heaping up and threatening the dictatorship of the proletariat, dangers which are the result of the false policy of a leadership that has lost its head.

The official chiefs, the press, the economists—everybody recognizes that the labors of the five year plan converted into a four year plan are being accomplished under extreme tension. The administrative methods of "emulation" show that the rhythms are attained in large measure at the expense of muscles and nerves. We do not for a moment doubt that a certain stratum of workers, above all among the Communists, bring a genuine enthusiasm into the work, and that the broader mass of the workers is drawn by this enthusiasm from time to time into different undertakings. But one would have to be totally ignorant of human psychology and even physiology to believe in the possibility of a mass "enthusiasm" for a work that lasts for a whole number of years.

MASS ENTHUSIASM IN THE CIVIL WAR

The work is carried on to day with the same methods that were used during the civil war. During the war, as is known, our experience and our munitions were not up to snuff. The masses made up for the omissions by their own superiority in numbers, their dash, their enthusiasm. Even during the war, this enthusiasm was not general, especially among the peasantry. The evaders and the deserters at that time played the same rôle as the drunkards who are frequently missing from work and the "floaters" who are constantly changing factories. But in certain periods, under the attacks of the Whites, not only the workers but also the peasants flung themselves into the struggle with a genuinely revolutionary plan. That is how we triumphed.

The civil war lasted three years. Towards the end of the civil war the general tension had reached the extreme limit. We gave up the second Polish campaign, in spite of the onerous conditions of the Riga treaty. A profound reaction against the tension and the privations of the three years of civil war began among the masses of peasants and workers. Among the peasantry, this reaction led to uprisings which embraced the fleet and the army. In workers' circles, it was translated into strikes and the so-called "stalling". Inside the party, the "Workers Opposition" began to gain in influence. Its strength obviously did not lie in the semi-syndicalist naivety of its leaders—in general, the dispute of that time did not at all concern the trade unions, as is taught by the stupid official manuals—but in the protest of the masses against the continual tension of forces and in the demand for rest.

In the famous discussion of 1920-1921.

In reality, under conditions of very poor productive forces, or better yet, of misery—without the New Economic Policy, that is, without the introduction of private interests on the basis of the market—there were not and could not be any other methods than those of war Communism. Before the passage of the N. E. P., the discussion always swerved around the question. The passage to the N. E. P. caused the very object of the discussion to disappear. Only Zinoviev, and to a certain extent Tomsky, continued to repeat the rigmarole on the A B C of trade union questions, without ever having understood what it was all about.

the principal argument against the "Trotskyists" of those days, which produced the greatest effect upon the masses, was this: "They want to carry on the work of economic construction with the same methods employed to make war."

It is in the atmosphere of the reaction against the period of civil war and war Communism that the economic philosophy of the present majority of the Stalinist faction took form: "Slow but sure." The retreat before private peasant economy, the contempt for planned methods, the defense of minimal rhythms, the detachment from the world revolution—all this constitutes the essence of Stalinism for the epoch of 1923-1928. But the well to do middle peasant—the prop and hope of this policy—became, by the force of things, the rich peasant (Kulak) and seized by the throat the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose industrial basis proved to be terribly backward. The period of presumption and indulgence gave way to a period of panic and precipitation. The slogan was issued: "Catch up with and surpass in the briefest possible time." The minimum five year plan of Stalin-Krzhizhanovsky approved in principle by the Fifteenth Congress was replaced by the new five year plan whose essential elements were borrowed from the Platform of the Opposition. That is what determines the character of the declaration of Rakovsky to the Sixteenth Congress: You have adopted a plan which can become a more serious step on the right road and we are prepared to offer you our most loyal cooperation without giving up any of our ideas and reserving the right to defend them in all the disputed questions.

When the Opposition defended—first the necessity itself of elaborating a five year plan, and then of fixed rhythms (the reality proved sufficiently that the rhythms we proposed were not at all illusory, as all the members of the present Political Bureau, without exception, clamored at that time), in a word—when the Opposition fought for an accelerated industrialization and collectivization against the line of 1923-1928, it regarded the five year plan not as a dogma but as a realizable hypothesis. The collective verification of the plan must be made in the process of work; as to the elements of this verification, they do not lie solely in the figures of socialist bookkeeping, but also in the muscles and nerves of the workers and the political sentiments of the peasants. The party must take all this into account, probe it, verify it, sum it up and generalize it.

HOW THE ECONOMIC TURN WAS CARRIED OUT

In reality, the economic turn towards industrialization and collectivization took place under the lash of administration panic. This panic still rages. It is enough to see the front pages of all the Soviet papers today: there is a complete adaptation to the slogans, the formulae and the appeals of the civil war: front, mobilization, breach in the front, cavalry, etc. . . . the whole seasoned now and then with sporting snobishness: start, finish, etc. How all this must sicken the serious workers and disgust everybody! While, under the terrible conditions of the civil war, we introduced, not without hesitation, the Order of the Red Flag as a provisional measure (Lenin was at first opposed to it and only accepted it later on as a temporary measure), today, in the thirteenth year of the revolution, there are four or five do not know how many more different Orders. But what is more important is the introduction of the uninterrupted working week, the attachment of workers to enterprises, the extreme augmentation of the intensity of labor. If the realization of these exceptional measures has become possible, it is due to the fact that in the mind of the vanguard stratum they have a provisional character, closely bound up with the idea of the five year plan. Just as during the period of the civil war, the workers and peasants bent all their strength to crush the enemy and assure themselves the right to labor and to rest, the vanguard elements of the working class of today sincerely count upon "catching up with and surpassing" the advanced capitalist countries and of guaranteeing themselves against economic and military dangers. Theoretically, politically and psychologically, the idea of the five year plan has become for the masses the problem of the construction of an armored wall around socialism in one country. The workers find in this the only justification for the extreme tension imposed upon them by the party apparatus.

On the twelfth anniversary, Stalin

wrote: "We shall yet see which countries are to be ranged among the most backward and which among the most advanced." Such declarations and others still more categorical were published and reprinted without end. They set the main tone to all the work of the five year plan. In the way of posing these questions before the masses, there are elements of deceit, half deliberate and half unconscious on the part of the bureaucracy, which wants to have the masses believe that the realization of the five year plan will put the U. S. S. R. at the head of the capitalist world. Does not the Kautsky of the apparatus—Varga—believe that the theory of socialism in one country, however absurd in itself, is nevertheless necessary to encourage the workers: the deceptions of the priests for the good of the soul?

STALIN'S "CATCHING UP WITH AND SURPASSING"

For his report to the Sixteenth Congress, Stalin ordered, among many other figures, statistics to prove that at the end of the five year plan the U. S. S. R. "will catch up with and surpass" the capitalist world. The traces of this order are found again in the speech of Stalin. Coming to the central point in the report of the relations between Soviet economy and world economy, the reporter confined himself, unexpectedly, to the following phrase: "We are terribly behind, with regard to the level of development of our industry, the advanced capitalist countries." And he promptly added: "It is only the acceleration of the rhythms of development of our industry that will permit us to catch up with and surpass technically and economically the advanced capitalist countries." Is a single five year plan assumed here or a series of five year plans—of that nothing is known!

With his theoretical rudiments, Stalin was simply frightened by the unexpected information with which he had himself supplied, and instead of presenting the party with exact data of our backward state and showing the real extent of the task which consists of "catching up with and surpassing", Stalin confined himself to smuggling in a small phrase on "our terrible backwardness" (so as to use it in case of need as a justification: there lies the whole art of his politics). As for the mass propaganda, it continues in the spirit of bluff and deception.

But it is not a question of the Soviet Union. The official organs of all the parties of the Comintern do not cease repeating that at the end of the five year plan the U. S. S. R. will be placed in the first ranks of the industrial countries. If that were right, the problem of socialism would be solved at the same time on a world scale. After having caught up with the advanced countries, the Soviet Union with its population of 160,000,000 inhabitants, with its enormous area and riches, would, already in the course of the second five year plan, that is, in three or four years, have to gain a position, in relation to the rest of the capitalist world, of much greater dominance than that which is enjoyed today by the United States. The proletariat of the whole world would be convinced by experience that socialism in one of the most backward countries has created in a few years a living level for the people incomparably higher than that of the advanced capitalist countries. The bourgeoisie would be unable to resist for another day the impulsion of the working masses. Such a path for the liquidation of capitalism would be the simplest, the most economical, the most "human" and the most certain, if it were . . . correct. In reality it is nothing but a fantasy.

The realization of the five year plan began in 1928-1929, at a level very close to that of pre-war Russia, that is, at a level of misery and barbarism. In the course of 1924-1930, enormous successes were achieved. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union still finds itself today, in the third year of the five year plan, from the point of view of its productive forces, much closer to czarist Russia than to the advanced capitalist countries. Here are some facts and figures.

Four-fifths of the whole productive population with us is engaged in agriculture. In the United States, for each person engaged in agriculture there are 2.7 engaged in industry.

Industrial work with us is five times as productive as agricultural work. In America, agricultural work is twice as productive as it is with us and industrial work—3.5 times. The net production per person in the United States is thus nearly ten

times higher than with us.

The power of primary mechanical installation in industry in the United States is calculated at 35,800,000 horse power. In the U. S. S. R. it is 4,600,000, that is, almost one tenth as much. If the power of a horse power is compared to the power of ten men it can be said that in the United States, three steel slaves are at work in industry for every inhabitant while in the U. S. S. R. there is but one steel slave at work for every three inhabitants. If the mechanical motive power is taken into account not only in industry, but also in transportation and in agriculture, the comparison would be even more unfavorable for us. Yet mechanical motive power is the surest measure of the power of man over nature.

At the end of the five year plan, the Soviet Union, in case the whole electrification program arranged for should be realized, will dispose of a fourth of the electric power of America, of a sixth of it if the difference in population is taken into account, and of a still smaller fraction of it if the difference in area is considered; and this coefficient assumes that the Soviet plan is realized entirely and that the United States do not advance one step.

In 1928, the United States produced 38,000,000 tons of pig iron, Germany—12,000,000 tons, the Soviet Union—3,330,000. Steel: United States—52,000,000, Germany—14,000,000, the Soviet Union—4,000,000. In the first year of the five year plan our metal production was equal to that of the United States in 1880; just a half a century ago, the United States produced 4,300,000 tons of metal, with a population equivalent to about a third of the present population of the U. S. S. R. In 1929, the U. S. S. R. produced about 5,000,000 tons of crude metal. This means that the consumption of metal for each citizen of the Soviet republic today is close to a third of what it was a half a century ago for each citizen of the United States.

The present metallurgical production in the United States is 28 percent higher than agricultural production; with us, metallurgical production is almost one-eighth of the agricultural production. At the end of the five year plan this relationship should be figured at 1:8. It is needless to explain the significance of metallurgy for the industrialization as well as for the collectivization of agricultural economy.

(Continued in the Next Issue)

N. Y. OPEN FORUM

March 21: (No Lecture: Entertainment)

March 28: THE SLOGAN OF THE SIX-HOUR DAY

By Arne Swabeck

at the

LABOR TEMPLE

14th Street and Second Avenue

Open at 8 P. M.

Admission: 25c

Auspices: New York branch, Communist League of America (Opposition).

CHICAGO OPEN FORUM

MARCH 22: "The Three Currents of the Communist Movement and Revolutionary Perspectives"

By HUGO OEHLER

EVERY SUNDAY 2:30 P. M. at

30 N. Wells St., Chicago

The lecture scheduled for comrade Max Shachtman at the Chelsea Labor Lyceum, to be held March 13 was called off by action of our national committee. The reason is the following:

Very recently a conflict arose within the Labor Lyceum between two forces: on the one hand comrades, members of the party and on the other hand non-party workers with the result that the party members were ejected from the Lyceum hall. While we are at all times eager to bring the revolutionary message to workers wherever they may gather we were not willing to keep this speaking engagement which could too easily become interpreted as a support to the fight against the party. We continually carry on our fight against false policies of the party leadership but will not become implied participants in a fight against the party.