

EDITORIAL NOTES

EVEN A BROWDER CAN LEARN

We have always maintained, in contradiction to the Right wing, that Centrism is not a stable and consistent political tendency and certainly not a stubborn and incurable "ultra-Left" policy. The long-lasting bloc of Centrism and the Right wing—during which the expulsion of the Left Opposition was carried out—is in itself a sufficient disproof of this contention. The adventurist plunges of the "third period" did not disclose a new face of Centrism. They only rounded out and confirmed the basic thesis of the Opposition: that Centrism is a policy of staggering between the classes which yields to the pressure of the moment and is characterized by wide swings to the Right and adventurist leaps to the Left. The attempts of the Centrists to exorcise themselves from the absurdities of the "third period" have been noted before, particularly in unemployment work and in the trade union question. Now we are witnessing an awkward somersault in the policy of the mine strike. It is needless to mention that the leading acrobat in this turn is Browder. He was the noisiest shouter of the pseudo-Left season. That qualifies him, according to the ritual of Stalinism, to be the first to make a turn of 180 degrees, without, of course, saying anything about the falsity of the discarded policy.

Browder will be remembered as the impetuous revolutionist who was through forever with "progressives". He proved—to his own satisfaction—that they had become "Social-fascists", and from this he drew the conclusion that the tactic of united front was out of date. As far back as February 27, 1929, that is, before the crisis and its consequent sharpening of the class relations, he wrote in the *Daily Worker*:

"We will no longer waste our energies and time in disastrous attempts to work with these fake progressives."

In the *Militant* for March 1 of the same year we explained, in our counter-revolutionary way, that Browder would have to change his mind about that. He did not disappoint us. After more than two years of rumination over the question—and a blow in the face from the actualities of the mining situation—the same Browder comes forward with an amazing discovery: that "we cannot decline to have relations" with . . . the Musteltes, Keeney. Browder could not keep such wisdom to himself. Fired with the zeal of a convert, the great man made a speech, to which—if the *Daily Worker* for July 11 does not lie—the "party leaders" had to listen. There he announced a new revelation:

"The Keeney group has the hegemony in Southern West Virginia. This requires that we have a tactic of maneuver in regard to these people. We cannot merely decline to have relations with whatever group comes out of this field, whether it is Keeney personally, or Keeney's representatives. The fact remains that one of the roads to the miners in this territory is maneuvers with this outfit."

From this it can be seen that even a Browder can learn something, if he is allowed enough time. The elementary idea, explained as far back as the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921, that we cannot decline to have relations with reformists has finally penetrated the thick skull of the Trotsky-killer, and that alone testifies to the power of the idea.

And along with that Browder has assimilated another simple and obvious conception and, as was to be expected, he also made a speech about it. Before the crisis, and after, our hero saw the "offensive of the workers" and the "revolutionary upsurge" rising high enough to drown him. But since then he has found a dry rock to sit on and collect his thoughts. The result of this cogitation is embodied in a speech to the Convention of the Young Communist League, reported in the *Daily Worker* of July 14th. The erstwhile fire-eater shakes the finger of caution at the assembled hot-heads and warns them:

"It is therefore clear that it is absolutely wrong to speak of the 'offensive of the working class and the counter-offensive of the capitalists'. 'The beginning of the mass actions has primarily a defensive character.' 'We witness a most vicious offensive of the capitalist class against the working class.'"

And so on. All of which is Browder's way of conveying the impression that the present struggles of the workers are defensive. This is, of course, a correct appraisal of the situation, as the *Militant* has pointed out a hundred times. The idea itself is not new: it is Browder's sudden comprehension of it that provides the day's sensation.

These incidents demonstrate, as has been said, that Centrism is able to change its mind a little: that the analysis of its policy as chronic ultra-Leftism is false; that even a Browder can learn. But from this we draw no optimistic conclusions, for the process takes too long, they do too much damage in the meantime and they correct one error only in order to commit a dozen more. Centrism is not consistently Leftist, but it is constantly false and consistently dangerous to the proletarian movement.

OUR REVOLUTION

The more clearly the unfolding of world events demonstrates that the conception of socialism in one country—the common theoretical bond of Centrism and the Right wing—is a strangulating noose for the international proletarian revolution, the more evident does it become that the banner of revolutionary internationalism belongs to the Left Opposition which has been forged in the struggle against the new revisionism. And by that increases the greatness of its historic responsibility and the magnitude of its tasks which brook no delay and take no heed of the weakness of our forces.

Blocked in Russia during the Chinese revolution and the English general strike, the Opposition had to confine itself to criticism and counter-proposals within a closed circle and was deprived of direct influence on the events themselves. The new rise of revolutionary development coincides with a decisive change in the internal relations of the Communist movement. The Opposition, beaten down with the defeats of the international proletariat which flowed from the ruinous policy of the Right-Centrist bloc, had awakened to new life with the revolutionary revival and confronts them with a world-wide organization and with all its fundamental principles confirmed in living experience. It is now endowed with the possibility, and the inescapable historic necessity, of bringing these principles to the fore as a direct influence on the developing revolutionary events. Every section of the International—our own among them—must put its ranks in shape for this grandiose international endeavor.

From this point of view we should greet in the warmest manner, and in deeds as well as in words, the proposals of comrade Trotsky in regard to the Spanish revolution which stands today in the center of the stage. To intervene directly, now, and on an international scale; to study the basic questions down to the bottom; to stir the Communist ranks with discussion over the problems of the Spanish revolution and mobilize international aid in time; to expose and drive out the revolution-destroying policy

Combine the Miners' Struggles into a United Front!

Continued from page 1

presence of a degenerated caste of labor skates who have written for the miners a long list of treacheries and sell-outs. But despite their common root, these four movements have not made common cause. It is in this absence of unity and solidarity in action that lies the greatest obstacle to the advancement of the militant miners' movement.

WHAT SHOULD THE LEFT WING DO?

Confronted with this rounded picture of the situation, what action should be undertaken by the Left wing and the Communists, represented in the National Miners Union? They must immediately raise the banner of unity, of the consolidation of all these movements. It is particularly in times of stress, when they are fighting—like the miners—with their backs to the wall—that the workers feel most acutely the need for unity. Divided ranks, separated movements only serve to discourage them, to lower their morale and fighting spirit. A new accretion of forces, unification with other workers' groups, the breaking down of the barriers that divide the workers and strengthen their enemies—these serve to hearten the workers, to make them feel their strength, to increase their enthusiasm, their endurance, their combativity. It is especially under present conditions that the workers look with just suspicion upon those who spurn the proposal for

of Centrism and bring forward the Marxist alternatives in the heat of events and directly upon them—such are the tasks envisaged for the International Left Opposition in comrade Trotsky's letter which we print in the current issue of the *Militant*.

We have reason to hope that our detachment of the Marxian Internationalists will do its part for the Spanish revolution. To a certain extent at least we have seen the huge vista opened up by the events in Spain and understood that our weight in the scale might not be without influence in the final summing up. We have ventured to believe that, not because we deceive others or ourselves about the forces at our disposal, but because our strength is the strength of the Marxian doctrines cry-

unity, who stand in the way of its consummation, who block its achievement: by petty tricks or pettier excuses. They will deal with such foes of labor with impatient speed—providing these foes are uncovered in a manner that enables the workers to see their real color plainly.

That is why it is an absolutely unpostponable duty of the N. M. U. to take the initiative in calling for a joint conference of all these striking and rebellious groups, to take the initiative now, to strike while the iron is hot. It would be a conference of equally represented workers, convoked for the purpose of coordinating the movements, of solidifying them under one head, and this is highly essential—of expanding the movement to other fields.

The present policy is simply to call upon the other insurgent groups "from below" to join the conference which the N. M. U. is calling. But this is a ridiculous caricature of what should be done. The other groups have no intention of dissolving themselves into the N. M. U. at the blowing of a trumpet. The conference cannot be a "clever maneuver"; it must be called for the purpose of mobilizing all the miners, regardless of their affiliations or beliefs, against the offensive of the coal operators and their agents. Such a conference can become the initial step in a move to amalgamate all the various independent and separate insurgent movements with the N. M. U. into a powerful and militant

stabilized in the international nucleus of the Opposition. We have not seen the Chinese revolution as a subject for abstract historical study. The international class struggle, in its dynamic development, is posing the questions anew in Spain and raising the principle line of the Opposition against the line of Centrism more insistently than ever. That is the way we see it. That is why we must strain every resource to make our mark on the situation while it is alive and fresh.

The Spanish revolution is our revolution. It is our task to make it the revolution of the American workers and to inspire them to fight for it on the soil of America as our comrades fight for it on the soil of Spain.

—J. P. C.

industrial union of the miners a force to be reckoned with by the operators and in the labor movement, a powerful impetus in building the Left wing movement everywhere else.

Who will reject and sabotage such a unity conference? The agents of the operators among the miners, the false leaders, the windjammers, the proprietors of "vested interests" in the miners. The Left wing can reject it only at its own expense and at the cost of the miners. It is in the process of fighting for the unity of the workers that they will be able to separate the wheat from the chaff, to judge who is right, who is for them, who is against them. The Left wing has nothing to fear from this process. Like the miners in general, it has everything to gain—providing it acts promptly and resolutely, providing it drops the futile policy of ignoring the other movements (this ostrich policy has been followed by the *Daily Worker*, which thinks to solve a problem by remaining silent) or of confining itself to mechanical denunciations of everything and everybody outside its ranks.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED BY CHEAP PHRASES

The worst thing the Left wing can do is to grow intoxicated with an inflated idea of its own strength or position. It is not leading the whole miners' movement, but only a part of it. It can win its way to leadership if it pursues the right policy now—and not after the strike in the "self-critical" articles of the press.

The Left wing dares not be deceived by cheap phrases, by boasting, by ruinous self-contentment with the big achievement it can legitimately record now. Do not be blinded to the correct policy towards the reformist organizations by Foster's chatter about "the growing fascization of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy" because it is doing "everything possible to hinder the strike". Lewis and Co. have been engaged in their trade of strike-breaking before "social-fascism" was ever invented. Do not be talked into dizziness about "the highly political character" of the Pennsylvania-Ohio strike because of capitalist terrorism—the terror of the bosses or the state does not make a strike "political". The strikes are desperate defensive actions of the miners which do not "require a high politicalization of the struggle".

(Foster, page 507). but the immediate, genuine application of the united front policy.

Do not be deceived with empty talk about the "correctness of the line". Foster may write for another year that "the Lawrence strike gave a first demonstration in the United States of the correctness of the R. I. L. U. line" (page 595). The Brownings, in their "self-criticism" after the event will write about the same Lawrence strike, in the same issue of *The Communist* (page 611), that "a small measure of organizational success was secured"—which coming from the source it does, means that virtually no success was the result.

THE MISTAKE IS BEING MADE NOW—CORRECT IT NOW!

Will the party have to draw up its balance sheet when the coal strike is concluded with the limping, apologetic remark that "a small measure of organizational success was secured"? Will the party leaders be allowed to speak of the "mistakes and shortcomings of the strike" when it is "too late", when it is over and the magnificent opportunity has been missed? We repeat: it would be fatal to permit such a state of affairs. The time to act correctly is now. Now is the time to correct the mistake in policy. The party is pursuing a course of conceit, of separatism, which is false and unworthy of Communists. Its leadership of the miners can not only be extended but made firm and lasting. The tens of thousands of miners in West Virginia, in Kentucky in Illinois—and the other sections which can be won on the basis of the appeal for unity and solidarity—must not be ignored. They cannot be won simply by calling upon them to join the N. M. U. That course was tried in Illinois with miserable results. It must be cast aside before it brings the same results in the present situation.

The miners need a revolutionary leadership which is intelligently awake to the requirements of the situation. The proposals of the Left Opposition meet these requirements. They should be adopted and applied. The official party policy is wrong and does not meet the requirements. It must be rejected. The mistake is being made now. Now is the time to correct it.

—MAX SILCHTMAN.

U. S. Crises - - Past & Present

Many people say, "This crisis is only another one of the crises which capitalism has gone through periodically since its inception; hard times have always come and gone and capitalism has always gone on to new heights after each crisis". In the following paragraphs we shall review briefly the history of the major past crises of American history from the standpoint of determining what factors made it possible for capitalism to recover after each of them, based on specific economic forces and not on any mystical "recuperative power" inherent in capitalism. If the factors which have pulled capitalism out of its hole in the past turn out to be no longer applicable now, the only alternatives left would be (1) a few, hitherto unheard of stimulus to capitalist development, or (2) the further development of capitalism must be looked on as degenerative rather than progressive.

While this study is based primarily on the facts of American economic history, we do not for a moment lose sight of the world-wide interconnection of capitalist interests and consequently of the pathological symptoms of capitalism in the form of crises. The very first of the major crises of the United States, that of 1837, was in part precipitated by an increase in the discount rate of the Bank of England in the effort to halt the flow of English capital into American speculative ventures. The timing of crises throughout the world, in fact, is becoming increasingly uniform. We limit the study of crises in this article to the American field purely for the sake of not packing too much material into a limited space.

The Early Crises

The two earliest crises of American history, the post-revolutionary crises of 1785-6 and the post-war crises of 1815-19, bore the stamp of an undeveloped economy—the principal concerns were currency inflation, primitive banking methods, excessive imports, insufficient crops to supply an export surplus with which to pay for them. Early in the latter crisis, however, a major step toward developed capitalism was taken when the tariff act of 1816 was passed, to encourage manufacturing industry. The "American system" of pre-Civil War politics, combining tariffs with internal improvements, chiefly waterways and highways, was an early manifestation of capitalist politics; territorial expansion into the Louisiana Territory and Florida furnished new markets, the steamboat was just coming into its own, and American shipping was carrying an increasingly important part of the foreign trade. In the old South, the development of the cotton gin changed cotton cultivation from a placid patriarchal mode of life, where in the abolition of slavery could be platonically discussed by "advanced" Southerners, into a hectic, speculative business with profits running up to 50 percent or more a year, the soil was henceforth mined, not cultivated; millionaire planters were now not uncommon, and slavery became an institution consecrated by the Bible itself.

The present article in the series of reviews of the position of American economy deals with crises of capitalism in this country in the past and the temporary solution found in years gone by to the present crisis. The problem of foreign trade and the possibilities for its development, as well as the problem of war in connection with American imperialist expansion will be dealt with in detail by the author in coming articles. Ed.

By B. J. Field

Prosperous virgin wheat in the West, prosperous cotton in the South, and prosperous tariff-supported manufacturing in the East solved the crises of 1819. The growing proletariat began to organize itself into trade unions, and by 1833 the first Council of Trade Unions met in New York City.

The normal course of capitalist development led to the crises of 1837, preceded by a wild banking, land and railroad boom. Again the solution was found in territorial expansion into Texas and the Oregon Territory; in record increases in crop cultivation, in an enormous increase in immigration and in population growth (from 1830 to 1890 population increased one-third each ten years, from 12,860,000 in 18300000 to 31,443,000 in 1890, a rate which if maintained could have made the present population of the United States 236,000,000, nearly twice the actual figure).

The labor movement began its wanderings in the political wilderness by the organization of "Know-Nothing", "Locofoco" and other parties which acted as tail to the kite of the major parties.

The definite victory of American capitalism over the one serious opponent which it has ever had, the Southern agricultural aristocracy, in the Civil War, unleashed another roaring boom period in 1865. Railroad mileage doubled in eight years, and absorbed more capital than any other industry, a good deal of it from Europe. The Bessemer process introduced in 1865 for the first time made steel a cheap, mass-production commodity; coal production quadrupled from 1860 to 1873. Agriculture boomed too—cotton production, at first hard hit by the Civil War, recovered by 1877 and reached as high figures as ever, at 4,500,000 bales, to go on to an average of over 6,000,000 bales in the next sixteen years and 10 millions in 1894. The first of the big mergers arrived in oil, coal, railroads. New resources were discovered in oil, copper, natural gas. Export trade still consisted primarily of foodstuffs and raw materials; the percentage of manufactured goods to total exports hardly changed between 1870 and 1890.

The Panic of 1873

The panic of 1873 was severe and complicated by government deficits and silver currency problems. With such an industrial background, however, it went through the classic course of the crises of a "healthy" capitalism: a sharp drop in prices, a call by banks for repayment of loans, or in the language of that day, "hard money instead of paper"; widespread bankruptcies, unemployment, reduction of industrial output, a strengthening of the financial position of banks and individuals because of the sharp

deflation, low money rates, easy terms for borrowers of new capital—one or two good crops, and the business cycle was ready to revolve again.

The labor movement reached a new high plane in the organization of the Knights of Labor and the development of bigger and better trade unions.

The next crisis came in 1893. The growth of capitalism had reached a point where internal contradictions between the great and the small bourgeoisie were beginning to compel the granting of concessions to the latter in the form of restrictions on the former—the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. Crops were still setting new high records, but agricultural crises were taking the form of agitation against the representatives of finance capital, leading to an unsuccessful bloc between farmers unable to pay their mortgages and unemployed labor, cut off from the escape to the West from low wages, long hours and insecure jobs by the filling up of the farm country. The tactics of the bloc, depreciation of the real value of bankers' claims by inflating the paper currency (Greenbackers, Populists), or by free coinage of silver at higher than its real value (Bryan and the Democrats, 1896-1904), succeeded in diverting proletarian and agrarian discontent from any revolutionary outlet in spite of such militant manifestations as the Homestead strike of 1892 and the Pullman strike of 1894.

The solution of the immediate problems of the crises of 1893 was based on a continuation of the post-Civil War trends—more intensive manufacturing, the creation of large industrial combinations culminating in the great trust-building era from 1899 to 1901, extension of agricultural production, and increased export trade stimulated by a series of wars including the Spanish-American, Boer and Russo-Japanese wars.

Railroad expansion had come to a climax in the ten years ending 1890, when 70,000 additional miles were constructed. After 1900 new construction slowed down sharply, but great new industries are now expanding—the electrical industry since 1890, automatic industrial machinery on an unheard-of scale, great new natural resources in oil, copper, silver, iron ore; bumper wheat and corn crops, a tripling of coal production in twenty years' time, all signified that capitalism was still on the upward trend.

The great crisis of 1907, like preceding crises, simply corrected the tempo of this development. Real estate speculation, which had resulted in overbuilding, was curbed, and an antiquated banking and currency system again showed its

deficiencies when it was necessary for banks in New York to issue clearing-house certificates among themselves as a form of emergency currency. The bumper crops of the next two years, however, sufficed to restore "normalcy", helped by a rising long-term trend in prices due to the increased production of gold from rich American and South African fields, and by the demands of the Balkan wars of 1911-13.

World War and 1914 Crisis

The crisis of 1914 was nipped in the bud by the world war, which meant to American capitalism a great speeding-up of the normal development, together with a huge influx of gold, an enormous stimulation to agriculture, with a modernized form of banking under the Federal Reserve Act.

The war left the United States with the most gigantic contradictions in its history—on the one hand, the largest manufacturing nation in the world, on the other, the largest producer of raw materials with which to feed competitive manufacturing nations, both branches of production striving avidly for export outlets. At the same time, the United States remained the depository of the world's largest stock of gold, and also a holder of billions of dollars of paper obligations payable in gold, which compelled America's debtors to stimulate their exports in competition with America to enable them to pay their debts. The inter-governmental debts outstanding at the end of the war were aggravated by the epidemic of American loans abroad by private investors, adding further burdens to European capitalism yet forcing it to redouble its efforts.

One of the century-old solutions for America's crises, to raise bigger crops, was still effective as late as 1919. In that year the farm production rose to the figures of the war boom year 1915, and with the prices then prevailing, reached the greatest value for any crop year in American history, before or since. A new high record for size of crops was made in 1926, but by that time the agrarian problem had reached a point where it could no longer be solved by such methods. The big crops of 1926 merely broke the price of farm products, and led to lower production in 1927. In the following year, 1928, bumper crops again brought prices down to a point where the aggregate value of the farm production was less than that of the smaller crops of 1927. The American farmer is being crowded out of world markets, and is faced by the dilemma—big crops and low prices, or small crops and not much better prices?

The manufacturing industries after the post-war boom of 1919, did not seem to be facing this dilemma. Tremendous sales of manufactured goods to Europe and South America, financed by foreign bonds floated during a violent securities boom, the rapid expansion of a group of industries including electrical equipment, automobiles, building construction (which had been held back during the war and hampered by high interest rates during the 1919 boom), the radio, movies and other such minor in-

dustries, for a time masked the increasing difficulties in which the great staple industries such as steel, lumber, cooper, oil, coal, textiles and others found themselves during all this period. The prosperity of the period from 1924 to 1929 was not widespread and did not extend to many basic industries until the final phases of the boom, just before the collapse. The absence of real prosperity was shown by the increasing difficulty of finding markets, which had to be forced by expensive advertising, high-pressure selling, instalment financing, etc., the increasing difficulty for men of fifty or over in finding jobs, the immigration restrictions, which revealed a real inability of capitalist development to handle an increasing population on the scale of the pre-Civil War days, and the decreasing percentage of the population engaged in industry in spite of the ability of capitalism to draw on new strata of the population, such as women and dispossessed farmers.

The labor movement, which had assumed an acutely militant phase following the 1919 crisis, slowly lapsed into lethargy because of the increasingly acute contradiction between the leadership and the objective conditions, of a failure of capitalism to make real progress during an apparent boom between two great crises.

This is the first time in the history of capitalism in which this has happened, and is confirmed by a study of per capita consumption of major commodities which show little net gain for the past fifteen years, but merely substitutions of one material for another, as for instance, less coal but more electricity, less meat and wheat but more sugar and dairy products, less lumber but more steel.

"Solutions" in the Past

Summing up, capitalism has found a "solution" for all former crises in the United States through one or more of the following means: territorial expansion, bigger crops, larger manufacturing facilities, foreign loans, railroad expansion, wars (particularly among foreign countries), technological improvements (including mergers), increasing exports, new industries.

Territorial expansion, apart from wars of conquest, is closed; bigger crops, as was proven in 1926 and 1928, no longer mean bigger farming income; larger manufacturing facilities are a burden, not a salvation, when the automobile industry has a capacity for producing 8 million cars with a home demand in "good" times of 4 million and exports of another 500,000, and radio set facilities more than three times the best year's sales; foreign loans are unsalable in any quantity because most of the possible borrowers are poor credit risks, as evidenced by their existing bonds selling far below par; railroad expansion has been a closed chapter for nearly a generation; technological improvements, as analyzed in a preceding article, simply aggravate the problem of the domestic market; the only new industries in sight appear utterly inadequate for any mass consumption boom—the outposts of business talk hopefully of television, home refrigeration in summer, steel construction for small houses, but there is no conviction in their voices.