

DISCUSSION ARTICLES

Some Shortcomings of the Thesis

The present pre-conference discussion will have to thoroughly evaluate the work of the period since our last convention...

This article will confine itself primarily to the thesis proposed by the National Committee for the present discussion.

The thesis marks a decided step forward from the platform accepted at our first conference (May 1920). At that time, the first cadres of the Opposition had been expelled from the party and League...

On the important question of the perspective of a long and inevitable period of social reformism and the organization of a national labor party, the thesis states:

"The Left Opposition, at its formative stage, leaned in the direction of this reformist perspective which constituted to a certain extent an uncritical carry-over of the preceding group struggle in the party, prior to the time when the Left wing took shape and was established as a political grouping distinct from all the others in the movement."

Change on Labor Party

It will be recalled that during the first pre-conference discussion and at the conference itself, the leading comrades not only stressed the correctness of the slogan for a labor party, but offered as their strongest argument its so-called "inevitability"...

The change on the question of "radicalism" is likewise a step forward. Further, the present theses no longer speaks of "our group" position previous to the actual organization of the Left Opposition...

The thesis states: "The unevenness of social development rendered particularly acute and jerky in the present epoch of imperialism, may easily advance the United States toward the head of the list."

The thesis states: "The unevenness of social development rendered particularly acute and jerky in the present epoch of imperialism, may easily advance the United States toward the head of the list. The thesis in attempting to take sharp issue with the general conception of the American Communist movement that the revolution in the United States is a thing of the distant future, exaggerates the state of affairs."

A few brief comments on some of the smaller shortcomings of the thesis. The first section mentions in disconnected form the position of France in Europe today. Instead of showing the importance of this position (the last important capitalist country to enter the crisis, its immense stock of gold) the thesis rests satisfied with the mere statement of it.

The section of the thesis which polemizes against the Stalinist conception of a narrowing of the "base for social reformism" should be strengthened along the following lines: The party leadership confuses the ground or base for the growth of social reformism with the "social basis" for it.

consciousness of the workers as well as the blunders and mistakes of the Communists. The mechanical "economic determinist" interpretation of the Stalinists, of course, leads to serious tactical mistakes. The thesis, while essentially correct should include the above thought.

The Economic Crisis

On the present economic crisis, the thesis states: "The present crisis is distinguished from many which preceded it in the history of capitalist production by its virtually planetary character"...

Comrade Field in his article on "The Meaning of the American Crisis" (which we intend returning to at some other time) tells us that there is a contradiction in the thesis when it states: (1) that America will get itself out of the crisis, and (2) "the prospect of struggles ahead that will increase in breadth and depth and militancy"...

The thesis correctly states that the American workers, because of the absence of struggles—and therefore defeats—in the previous period will have vitality for militant struggle. But—and this is unfortunately overlooked—these struggles are primarily defensive. Can we expect the present defensive struggles of the workers to be converted into the counter-offensive against the capitalists during the present crisis? It is hardly likely.

To Improve our Will

In the discussion on the first two main divisions of the national committee thesis in our branch, the question was asked: "How can American capitalism issue out of this crisis? As a whole, the thesis correctly describes the methods capitalism will use to endeavor to extricate itself from the crisis and analyzes the contradictions it will meet in each process. Yet it gives no direct answer to this question since it can only be answered from life, in the course of the class struggle."

I think that the formulation in the thesis to the effect that "the present crisis of American capitalism is not its final revolutionary crisis", is erroneous as it stands, and is not in harmony with the rest of the thesis. It leads to an underestimation of revolutionary possibilities the war danger, organization, op-

portunism defeatism, etc. Just as the formulation to the contrary would be just as erroneous, leading to Leftist adventures or indolent fatalism. The revolutionary Marxian party has a role, a historical duty, to bend every effort to make each crisis of capitalism its last. Aside from a breakdown of economy and capitalist rule, there must be a conscious organized proletariat with a will for power, before capitalism can be destroyed. The party must work consciously for this at all time, we must not allow one situation to be missed if it is in our power to advance to victory. Without losing any of its ability for recognizing reality, the Left Opposition must give itself and the party a determined tenacity to work for the revolution. True, we are faced with tremendous difficulties we are a far way off

The Thesis and the Crisis

The thesis deals at some length with the crisis and presents many facts, but leaves unanswered a couple of important points which I desire to raise for discussion. One place, the thesis says, "The present crisis is distinguished from many which preceded it in the history of capitalist production by its virtually planetary character."

In another party, the thesis says, "The present crisis comes after the existence of an acute disruption of the 'equilibrium' between agriculture and industry, and only serves to aggravate the agrarian situation; it appears coincidentally with a contracting domestic market which gives no appearance of noteworthy extension in the immediate future; and, finally, it occurs in the period of declining world imperialism and is part of a planetary crisis which, precisely because American imperialism's sources of power are spread all over the world, invest the disruption of American economy with highly perilous character."

To say, "coincidentally with a contracting market" is to put the problem upside down and approach from the side of consumption rather than the side of production. This factor should be presented as an ABSOLUTE decrease in the number of workers in production, a fact Marx predicted in the last century.

Further, the most vital point, not only in regard to the world crisis, but particularly in regard to American imperialism—an excess of capital a new form of overproduction in the period of financial capitalism, is not even considered or presented in its proper light in relation to the crisis.

As to prospects, the thesis says, in a criticism of the Stalinist perspective, that "A more objective estimation of the

from our goal, but that does not mean necessarily that it is a long time off. The character of this crisis, as to its finality, should be put problematically, a question of struggle. The Bolshevik-Leninist in 1905 and 1917, fought to make the crisis of capitalism its last, and won. Besides the art, we must have the will. It is to improve our will that I propose this change. Capitalism can issue out of this crisis and have another only after a defeat of the proletariat. Do we already see defeat? No, our thesis time and again must call our League our party, our class to work and to fight for victory. This does not mean that at the same time we should not point out, expose and mercilessly fight against all dangers and obstacles in our path that threaten the victory for our class.

—CLEM FORSEN.

prospects for a decisive upward swing of the conjuncture would put the period for a commencement of recovery at an even later date." Saying such without explaining what kind of a revival it can be is to leave hanging in the air the main point of the perspective. We may add that the date of recovery is not as important as the kind of recovery.

No blueprint can be given, nor asked for, but a Marxian group must at least present possible variants as well as what is not possible. The thesis takes up what is not possible but does not deal with what is possible.

It is possible for the crisis to develop into a war. Such a one would be not a mere economic crisis, but a new problem of higher dimensions. With it would proceed a negative revival of industry and production only to end in greater difficulties. At least there would be a flow before the next ebb, considering capitalist economy. It is most probable (as presented by the thesis) that American imperialism at the expense of the other imperialisms, will come out on top. But on top of what, is as important as to specify: on top. Such a revival will not be the prosperity of the immediate past; however, this does not mean decline.

The Leninist analysis that we are in a period of decay capitalism means that capitalism as a WHOLE is in decay and from this approach, American imperialism, from the absolute standpoint, is also in the decline. However, from the relative standpoint the problem is different. From the relative standpoint, American imperialism still has ebbs and flows because it holds the upper hand and all indications are that, in the downward curve American imperialism will be able to hold its upper position (at the expense of the others). The problem can only be considered correctly from its twofold relation of the absolute and relative.

To show that there will be a diminishing rate of profit and draw conclusions that this holds decay and decline for American production, is false. A diminishing rate of profit in the past has accompanied an increase in production and logically so. Profit is only a part of surplus value and such an approach will not settle the basic problem of capitalist production and its crisis.

We must have more discussion on these two points; difference of this crisis in relation to the past and the variations possible for the future in order to round out the thesis on this point.

—HUGO OEHLER.

TORONTO

The Canadian Red Raids

When the first attack was made against the Communist party in Toronto two years ago the reformist leaders were able to delude many workers by explaining that the rights of free speech were being taken away from the Communists only, and not from the workers.

In less than a year the right of free speech had been banned even for the "pinkest of the plank."

Today the Communist party is again attacked, not locally but nationally. The Attorney-General of Ontario has openly stated that the purpose of this attack is to drive the Communist party into illegality.

History has already taught us that political tendencies of the day are determined by the basic economic conditions and in order to understand why the political rights are being taken away from the Communists it is necessary to go beneath the surface.

In Canada, agriculture still plays a dominant role in the economic and political life of the country. The present depression coupled with the big drop in the price of agricultural products below the cost of production; the record-breaking accumulation of tremendous stocks of raw materials; the falling off of the internal and external trade—have left in their wake mass starvation and destitution. Thousands upon thousands of small and middle-class farmers are ruined and bankrupt, while mass unemployment leaves its bitter trail from one end of the country to the other.

Again, in Canada, workers have demonstrated behind the Red Flag. Troops being called out to cow down the workers has become a common occurrence. Militant demonstrations of the unemployed, while yet still limited to the West are growing. The hungry workers in the cities want bread. The ruined farmers want the bankers' noose taken off their necks.

This present crisis is quite different structurally from that of previous crisis and will not be overcome in a hurry. Even the capitalist bankers themselves openly say that much. This winter, the bourgeoisie openly state, is going to be the hardest Winter yet experienced by all classes. Mr. Meighan, former Prime Minister of Canada, in a speech at Toronto stated "that Canada is facing its greatest trial in history." "Unless something is done to meet the growing competition from Russia, the existence of thousands of producers will be ruined." He calls for a war against Russia to save capitalism but that is another question which we will discuss in future. The fact, though, is, the growing competition Canadian capitalism is meeting on the world market is coming not only from Russia, but from Australia, Argentina, etc., added to which is the reduction of the demand itself, and there lies the crux of the matter.

Canadian capital is preparing to fight for a greater share of the markets of the world by the lowering of the standards of living for the workers and farmers. The question before capital is not only of this Winter as many bourgeois politicians wish us to believe, but the Winters and the Summers of the future.

What are the principal factors behind the present assault of capital against the workers and farmers? The power of the bourgeoisie in Canada has been built up on a strongly organized and centralized industrial and banking system. The small and middle-class farm-

ers, in the vain hope of achieving security and independence, organized themselves in a "Wheat Pool", financed by the banks with the purpose in view of keeping up prices. But this worked to the contrary. Today they are worse off than ever before, and their land and possessions are mortgaged to the banks who are also extracting their pound of flesh for the huge accumulated stocks in the "Wheat Pool".

The workers—except for a small minority of the higher skilled labor—are completely unorganized and at the mercy of the bosses. The majority of industries are concentrated in Ontario and Quebec. In the latter Province the workers are almost completely under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and the company and Catholic Unions. In Ontario, it is the Orangemen and conservative trade unions. Only in the West have the workers demonstrated with the spirit of militancy.

The leader of the workers and poor farmers is a weak Communist party. The false policies and perspectives the Stalinist (Cominter) has foisted on the Canadian party in the last few years, is one of the principle factors responsible for the failure of the party to penetrate the masses. The isolation of the party finds its reflection in the fact that in the West where the workers are more militant, the party is organizationally weaker than in the East, where the workers are more conservative. The adventurous 3rd period policies were forced on the party during the peak of the capitalist prosperity. When the slogan should have been for partial demands, the party was "fighting for the streets". What saved the party from committing complete suicide in those days, was the fact that the membership of the party is made up of foreign language federations, whose activity is mostly cultural and social.

The growing terror against the Communists raises to the forefront more sharply than ever before the necessity of the rehabilitation of the party. In the present crisis, the party is faced with problems that raise again the following demands, if the party is to measure up to its tasks.

- 1. Unification and reinstatement of all expelled Oppositionists.
2. Inner-party democracy and ideological clarity; that is absolutely essential if the membership is to develop as the real leaders of the working class.
3. Policies based not "on the building of socialism in a single country", which cannot become a reality surrounded by a bourgeois globe, but on international revolution.

We warn all Left wing workers, whatever may be the differences that they may have with the Communist party leadership, that this must not be made the cover for the failure to take a definite position in the defence of the party. The workers of Canada if they allow the bourgeoisie to smash the party, will find that tomorrow they too will be disarmed. We warn the workers and farmers of Canada, that the capitalists are preparing a general attack against your living standards. The successful suppression of the party will follow in the suppression of all militant labor organizations and progressive bodies.

In the fight for legality, the Left Opposition calls upon all workers to actively support the party.—Q.

CREDITS FOR THE SOVIET UNION

(Continued from page 1) workers the simple material needs that link them closely with the needs of the Soviet masses."

More than two months later, on June 21, 1930 (the Militant, under the heading of "Towards a Concrete Program of Action"), had the following to say: "The demand for credits for the Soviet Union at once reveals the inner link between the interests of the American working class and the workers of the Soviet Union. Millions are idle in the United States. But the socialist plans of the Soviet Union cry out for machinery and other industrial equipment. Employment here and collaboration with the Five Year Plan in the U. S. S. R. would be the consequence of large scale credits. Thousands of American workers would receive practical lessons in the foundations of internationalism in the mental struggle between capitalism and socialism and the meaning of Communism. Thousands could be mobilized for the U. S. S. R. and against the capitalist government of the U. S."

In this manner, we advanced the slogan for trade and credits with the Soviet Union on a revolutionary basis, coinciding in this with the demand raised by the International Left Opposition and first initiated by comrade Leon Trotsky from his Turkish exile in an article written on March 14, 1930.

Stalinist Objection

What did all the Stalinists of the world reply to this imply and irrefutably correct proposal? They rejected it decisively. The Czechoslovak party organ wrote that according to the "Trotskyist plan", the contradiction in principle between the Soviet state and the capitalist world is to be replaced by their mutual collaboration. . . . It is a pity that the Messrs. Trotskyists did not tell us on what principles the general Czechoslovak-Soviet plan for the solution of the crisis should be constructed.

on capitalist principles—but by that, aid would be given to the victory of capitalism within Russia; or on socialist principles—this would mean that the Trotskyists believe in the readiness of the capitalists themselves to introduce socialism. . . . the responsibility for unemployment is to be thrown upon the Soviet Union which does not give us sufficient orders. . . . Instead of compromising the worthless capitalist system, the industrial crisis is to serve to compromise the Soviet Union." (Rude Pravo, June 24, 1930.)

In one form or another, these same unbelievably stupid objections were repeated by the Stalinists in every other country. In the American party, such a job naturally fell to the lot of Earl Browder, who could not find words violent or contemptuous enough with which to exorcise the "counter-revolutionists" and their "counter-revolutionary" plan.

Our answer to the infantile clownings of the Stalinists was contained in the words with which comrade Trotsky concluded his proposal: "But is there any hope that with their present leadership the Communist parties are capable of a serious revolutionary mobilization of the masses? We will not decide this question beforehand. The policy which we defend has such profound roots in the objective situation and in the historical interests of the proletariat, that it will finally make its way through all the obstacles. It is entirely a question of time. But that is a very important question. The duty of the Left Communist Opposition, therefore, is to exert all its strength to shorten the period."

So powerful is a correct revolutionary idea that in the span of more than a year it has broken through the opposition of the bureaucratic apparatus and has finally made its way into the program of the Stalinists, giving new justification—if it were needed—for the insistent advocacy of the idea by the opposition. What value has the contempti-

ble reference, in the same "unemployment program", to the Left Opposition's program being identical with that of the A. F. of L. when the new turn of Mr. Browder and Co. so glaringly reveals their own doleful bankruptcy and incompetency in this question, which they have overcome shamefacedly after a harmful delay of a year and a half—a period in which the intense unemployment crisis in the United States offered the richest possible soil for rooting the idea in the minds of the workers?

The Need of Credits

Yet, even now it is not completely overcome. The formulation of the demand in the party program is a half-way measure. The Opposition's proposal must be adopted in its entirety. The party demands recognition of Russia and the "development of trade relations" for the entirely correct purpose of putting idle American factories to work and of filling Russia's growing demands. But what is one of the—if not the—outstanding obstacles to trade relations? Not merely non-diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, but the virtual credits boycott against it by the U. S. It is no secret that the Soviet trading agency in New York is compelled to pay interest rates running as high as twenty-five and thirty percent—a particularly outrageous sum in the face of "easy money"—in order to swing even the smallest purchase of American products. All the babble about "trade relations remains babble unless one raises the demand for large, long-term credits to make these relations possible for the Soviet Union on the most advantageous basis.

The demand for long-term credits to the Soviet Union is particularly facilitated at the present time when the United States is expending hundreds of millions of dollars in credits to bolster up the collapsing structures of reaction in England, Germany and elsewhere. What pointed lessons in the class struggle the

Communists can teach the American workers in this connection! The present party proposal leaves the whole issue without its spear-head.

Further: Aside from the proposal being buried at the end of nine other points—instead of being up at the head of the list as a central, urgent demand—there is nothing said about organization a nation-wide campaign among the workers and throughout the organized labor movement to press for its adoption. This demand gives the Communists a splendid opportunity to organize a broad united front movement of workers of all industrial or political standpoints by approaching the non-Communist labor organizations with the proposal for joint action on this issue. Their replies to this proposal will show the workers following the reformist leaders where the latter really stand on questions of importance to labor.

Still further: the party speaks in a permanently hysterical monotone about the defense of the Soviet Union, as though it were a purely military question. Behind military power stands the factory—industrial power, and for Russia especially, it means the power (and consequently the consolidation) of the proletarian dictatorship. But for this it requires that which it has not, at least what it has not in adequate or properly developed quantities: machinery. To get this highly essential machinery, it must trade with the bourgeois nations. To trade on a scale commensurate with its "growing demands", requires not so much diplomatic recognition—which we favor unreservedly—as it does credit facilities which Russia hasn't got and which Hoover seeks to prevent it from getting. In short, regardless of what angle of the question is approached, the formulation in the party program reveals its inadequacy and half-heartedness in exactly the same degree as the rounded and incontestably correct standpoint of the Left Opposition is confirmed.

Finally, one phase of the party's demand requires comment. It says that the "development of trade relations. . . all the constantly growing demands of

the successful construction of the workers' government and its five year plan". The essence of what is said here is a repetition of what we have always contended and a slashing refutation of the reactionary theory of "socialism in one country". According to the latter, Russia can be made a self-sufficient socialist island, not dependent upon any of the rest of the world, because it has all the economic resources and prerequisites for the construction of a socialist classless society. If this is so, and if we have—as the Stalinist bureaucracy declares—"entered the period of socialism in the Soviet Union", trade relations with capitalist countries would not need "development" but "diminution". The party tells us, now, however, that precisely because of the "constantly growing demands of the successful construction" there must be a "development of trade relations". It is this simple and ordinarily indisputable idea that we have defended against the vulgar national socialists for years. The Opposition declared a thousand times, against the furious denials of the Stalinists, that Russia's connection with, its need of and even its subordination to the world market would become more acute precisely in the period of its economic construction and reconstruction. We pointed out that the contradictions which each passing year multiplied for a capitalist encircled workers' state would bring increasingly conclusive refutation of the theory of "socialism in one country".

Time and its events are great teachers, even if their teachings mean so little to the mentally ossified Stalinist official. The Browderist not only refuse to learn, but try to prevent others from learning. The former have at their disposal an enormous, usurped apparatus. Our weapons are chiefly correct ideas. The machine has a temporary strength. But in the end, ideas last longer and prove invincible. The ideas of the Left Opposition are even now making a way for themselves to the minds of the militant workers. The only boast of the Centrist official is that he can succeed for a time in delaying their progress.—S.