

DISCUSSION ARTICLES

A Reply to the Discussion

It must be admitted that the conference discussion material has yielded very little either in the way of positive supplement to the draft thesis of the National Committee or criticism of it.

Our draft has been submitted to an international discussion, and a beneficial criticism from that source is not yet excluded.

A Discredited Idea

Comrades Rose and Carter are the rightful representatives of these tendencies. In their discussion articles they only recapitulate the attitude and point of view they have constantly maintained against the National Committee.

Comrade Rose renews his long-standing feud with us on three very important questions: On the evaluation of the history of the party; on the present status and the perspectives of the party; and on the attitude of the Left Opposition toward the party.

Comrade Rose's first fault, from which the others flow, is his grossly distorted view of the history of the party. This is not without valid reasons. During all the years of the party's formative period and its emergence as a dynamic factor in the class struggle at the head of the conscious workers' movement he stood aside from the party and took no part in the making of its history.

If it was a mistake in the first place to organize the party, if it was wrong to belong to the party since its foundation, if the circles of word-radicalism which conducted a venomous fight against the party since its inception were correct—if all this were so, comrade Rose's approach to the question would have a certain justification.

Distorted History

Take a few samples of comrade Rose's history at random: In each instance we find them to be distorted, one-sided and false. "The native proletarian elements . . . round the I. W. W. were at first neglected by this rising movement" (the party).

Comrade Rose speaks of party members "sent in 'to capture or destroy the I. W. W.'" Who were they and when was such an instruction ever given out by the party?

We have always been under the impression that the Passaic strike was a landmark in party development, that it was handled on a national scale with considerable skill and that it signaled the party's supremacy in the radical labor movement.

rage to the A. F. of L. fakery, to disspate and demoralize." What is this but I. W. W. chatter, later repeated by Browder and similars to justify the "turn" of the "third period"?

One more example: In our platform adopted at the First Conference we gave a review of the mine strike of 1927-28 and the subsequent developments.

Here again comrade Rose gives a prominence to the I. W. W. out of all proportion to their actual merits while he belittles the achievements of the party.

Repeating Slander

Such an account of the affair as comrade Rose offers is false to the core, and provocative as well. You will never get the Left Opposition to accept the I. W. W. version of party history. Just consider such an expression as this: "The party pounced upon this movement

Repeating Slander

hands of one imperialist power—the United States. To substantiate the possible variants upon which our general strategy is based it must be proved whether, despite this general crisis period, room for expansion at least for single capitalist powers can still be found.

Problems of Our Perspectives

This we believe, is the most likely variant for the immediate future which can be quite well substantiated by the present economic and political trends.

But at the outset let us remember that this question is closely bound up with the perspectives of the world's revolutionary movement. It will be of decisive importance whether it progresses toward new victories or whether it suffers new serious defeats.

Hence, our thesis does not at all draw any conclusions based upon the ability of American capitalism to solve its problems or to overcome its contradictions. It proceeds from the inevitable intensification of these contradictions to hold out "prospects of struggle which will increase in breadth and depth and militancy".

Fundamentals of Present Crisis

The capitalist system of society as a whole has reached its period of decline. The crisis which followed the short speculative post-war "boom" marked a beginning of a period of crises for capitalism, within which the business cycles still operate but are changed to the degree that the general period has changed.

Information about it. We have always been under the impression that the Passaic strike was a landmark in party development, that it was handled on a national scale with considerable skill and that it signaled the party's supremacy in the radical labor movement.

[the relief campaign, "brought to a head" by the I. W. W.) as a godsend." Why not add that the party stole all the money and thus round out the story that all its enemies have told?

With such a view of party history as comrade Rose has expounded in his articles it is only logical that he should see nothing good in it today and no hope for its future.

The Communist Party of Germany has no better policy and no better leadership—if we allow for proportions—and yet it influences millions and continues to grow.

False Viewpoints

The theory that the party was worthless in the past and hopeless for the future brings our critic inevitably to a collision with the policy toward the party which the Left Opposition has pursued since its inception.

We cannot determine the line of the Communist League in this manner. First we must clearly define the premises upon which our work as a faction of the party is founded.

—JAMES P. CANNON. (The second article by comrade Cannon in reply to discussion will appear next week.)

fore be incorrect to speak of prospects of American capitalism overcoming its crisis merely on the basis of the process of business cycles operating in the home market.

Further World Market Expansion

The majority of the world's population still consist of peasants (still mainly engaged in natural economy). To turn the peasants into elements of capitalist production, i. e., producers and consumers of capitalist society, is one of the important processes of capitalism and has proven one additional means of capitalist expansion throughout its history.

The crisis releases enormous amounts of liquid capital seeking new fields of investments. Such are to be found primarily in these economically backward countries, colonies and semi-colonies.

To develop such backward countries capitalistically, although offering a means of expansion for a time, does not at all solve the contradictions of world capitalism, nor of any of its component parts.

American imperialism won the war. It established its world hegemony. It intervened in Europe in 1923 to defeat the German proletariat and "stabilize" German capitalism.

America's Role in the World Market

It intervened in Europe in 1923 to defeat the German proletariat and "stabilize" German capitalism. It intervened again in 1931 to postpone the German revolution and to put the screws on France.

Evidently, Wall Street does not in the least fear the consequences to its own market within these competing powers by limiting their rations or even crushing them as competitors.

So far, however, these forecasts have taken into account only the possibilities of American capitalism extricating itself out of the present crisis in connection with its possible further expansion on the world market.

—ARNE SWABECK.

OUR INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

The International Bulletin of the Communist Left Opposition which is published in French and German by the International Secretariat, and an English edition of which is published by the Communist League (Opposition), is now being put on a subscription basis which will considerably facilitate its publication and distribution.

The Bulletin contains reports of the work and the views of the Opposition groups throughout the world, and is the main channel for the exchange of opinions in the Left Opposition and for the discussion of disputed questions.

Contradictions of the Agrarian Crisis

The agrarian crisis presents itself as a blending of the contradictions of a theoretically pure capitalism with those produced by the law of uneven development. Here we have before us not only the striking discrepancy between the productive forces and the solvent demand but also barriers erected by the backward mode of production restricting the free flow of capital in the creation of the average rate of profit.

The present agrarian crisis which more immediately receives its capping character from the tremendous impetus given to the extension of grain culture of the Western Hemisphere during the War and the period of revolutionary upheavals and crop failures immediately following, has its more profound roots fixed in the enormous technological improvements (fertilizers, machinery, etc.) much of which was applicable even to small scale agriculture.

Effects of "Return to Normal"

The return of normal conditions, the rehabilitation of Eastern Europe grain fields in the face of the huge acreage increase in America, could only result in the dizzy fall of the wheat bushel; concurrent with and supplementing the deepened industrial crisis on the other hand, whets yet more its edge on the attenuated condition of the city working masses.

On the theoretical field it hammers decisively the nails into the coffin of the dogma of Malthus-Ricardo, and affirms in dazzling manner the contention of Engels: "Against the competition of the virgin prairie soils and of the Russian and Indian peasants ground down by taxation, the European capitalist farmer and peasant could not stand up at the old rents. A portion of the soil of Europe fell definitely out of the competition for the raising of grain, the rents fell everywhere . . . This accounts for the woes of the landlords from Scotland to Italy, and from Southern France to Eastern Prussia."

In industry a fall in commodity prices is immediately followed by a withdrawal of capital from the affected lines and its reinvestment in a more profitable sphere. This process, regarded by Smith and the other economists as another instance of the unerring machinery of Providence flagrantly ceases to function in the case of small scale agriculture.

Attempts at Organization

The unbridled anarchy of the world market calls forth both in agriculture as well as in industry attempts at organization. In the latter sphere these take the form of trusts, cartels, etc., which, being based on the highest developed technology, are up to a certain point revolutionary in content, insofar as they consolidate the economic foundation for the next mode of production.

The industrial crises in the past have been by their very nature cyclic in character. Even the present crisis, which may be considered the first of the downward crisis, will undoubtedly be followed by a partial revival at least in America.

Above we have briefly sketched the effect of small scale farming on the price level, and it directly follows that the crisis would be of a more permanent nature than the industrial crisis.

The most fundamental tendency of

capitalist production is the constant increase of the specific gravity of the constant capital over the variable capital, and of the fixed capital compared with the circulating capital. It is this fact which gives to an increased consumption of constant capital the role of the decisive factor in the overcoming of the periodical crisis.

The agrarian crisis can be temporarily overcome only through the agency of calamities brought about by the workings of nature or social chaos. The first possibility is that of an international crop failure, which is improbable; the other is that of another imperialist war which must, however, lead not only to its temporary solution by higher grain prices, but to the solution of all the contradictions of capitalism, to the social revolution.

Society does not travel along lubricated rails, as the "gradual" phillistine would have us believe. The historical process heaves its way, having no quams not only for individuals but even for the physical existence of classes. The extermination of the yeomanry in England accompanied by the unfathomable misery of its victims, had, however, a revolutionary significance. The present suffering of the farmers can have none such. With wheat at forty cents, and less, a bushel, and with a most uncertain future, it is hardly likely that there should be present the incentive for the establishment of large capitalist farming with the capital outlay involved.

A Revolutionary Force

Marxism beginning with unquestionable historical data arrives at the conclusion that the peasantry can play no independent revolutionary role. This does not, however, excuse at all the tendency all too prevalent among certain Communists to "overlook" the agrarian exploited. Truly did Kautsky remark that in the same degree as agriculture recedes in favor of industry does the peasantry gain in political importance.

Marxism, in contradiction to other ideologies, can have no desire to set barriers up to the historical process. With objective eye it adjudges each social phenomenon by the criterion of hindering or advancing the social development. With this in mind, and considering the fact that small scale production is but a decaying remnant of a previous productive mode, we must declare ourselves categorically opposed to .any demands serving the purpose of retarding the disappearance of small peasant property.

The most deplorable failing in the thesis is the utter lack of an analysis of the agrarian crisis, which is offered but two lines. The problem is as urgent as it is untouched. That difficulties present themselves in its elaboration is no excuse for such flagrant negligence.

—W. KREHM.

SPANISH REVOLUTION

The Revolution in Spain . . . 10c

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These two pamphlets will give the reader an invaluable analysis of the present situation in Spain and the prospects of the further development of the revolution. The standpoint of the Opposition, in contrast to that of all the other groups involved in the present Spanish situation (the official Communist party, the Maurin group, the syndicalists, and others), is presented with the exceptional clarity and penetration for which the author is so well-known.

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