

EDITORIAL NOTES

AN APOLOGIST FOR STALINISM.

One of the surest signs of the significance of alien classes upon the course of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is its rabid persecution of the Left, proletarian wing of the Party. It is the hounding, exiling, imprisoning and murdering of the unwavering and incorruptible defenders of the ideas and the tradition of the October revolution which give the lie to every pretended "left" turn of the Centrist regime and deprive it of the right to confidence. The defense of the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union involves in the highest degree the unceasing exposure of the reactionary terror against the Bolshevik-Leninists and the most energetic defense of its victims. Every Oppositionist worthy of the name counts this among his first duties.

Weisbord, who assisted in the expulsion and terror campaign against the American Oppositionists, turned up—it will be recalled—two years later with the offer to instruct us how to interpret the principles of the Opposition in America. Now he is enlarging his territory. First he wanted to correct our misconceptions of the situation as comrade Trotsky explained it; now it is comrade Trotsky himself whom he takes to task. Trotsky, who knows something about the bureaucratic degeneration of the Stalinist apparatus and its terror against the Leninist Opposition—and not by hearsay—has again illuminated this side of the question, among the others, in his recently-published thesis on the "Problems of the Development of the U. S. S. R." Therein he demonstrates once more that "the Stalinist plebiscitary regime has been converted into a main danger of the dictatorship of the proletariat." Against this reasoned and deliberate conclusion Weisbord has intervened with a statement of his own in which he corrects the "exaggerations."

In this statement we read the following: "Comrade Trotsky declares there is not a trace of party democracy. Local organizations are selected and automatically reorganized by secretaries. Local secretaries are appointed, Congresses are arbitrarily postponed, delegates selected from the top, every spark of those features which go to make up the nature of a revolutionists crushed; Blumkins are shot down, Besedovskys direct the purging of the party, etc." All this is literal quotation from the thesis of Trotsky, but it is quoted with disapproval. Things are not so bad as Trotsky makes them out. Like the impartial judge who "sees both sides" he comments: "We submit (1) that this evidence is exaggerated (2) that while some of the above is true in part, yet this is not decisive as to whether there is a party."

Exaggerated? Only "some" of it true, and that only "in part"? Where, how and in what way, the Weisbord statement does not say, and cannot say. We know that the monstrous accusations against the Left Opposition (The "Wrangle Officer" and so forth) were all exposed and refuted, but we do not know of a single instance where the Opposition was convicted of falsifying or "exaggerating". Is there a trade of party democracy? Can a worker Bolshevik stand up and speak out for the basic ideas of the October revolution without being sent to prison or Siberia? Was not the heroic Blumkin assassinated? Was not the organizer of the October revolution and the Red Army exiled to Turkey by a dicker with Kemal Pasha and kept there by an agreement with the Bourgeois governments of Europe? Did not Besedovsky help to purge the Party of "Trotskyists" before he jumped over the fence into the camp of the White Guard?

We have one more question that is of the deepest concern to every revolutionist of the entire world: Is not the sick Rakovsky, the great hero and warrior of the revolution, being slowly and deliberately done to death right now in the bitter cold of Siberian exile? Exaggerations? No! We "submit" that comrade Trotsky has only told the indisputable truth and that this truth must be made known to the proletarian vanguard without any mitigation or glossing over of the cruel facts. It is not Trotsky who exaggerates the bureaucracy and the terror against the Bolshevik-Leninists, but (Weisbord who minimizes and thereby apologizes for them.

The Weisbord statement is, of course, no accidental error. It has an intimate connection with the whole campaign he has conducted against the American section of the Opposition with ideas and slanders borrowed from the Centrists and the Right Wing. Our National conference unanimously rejected the proposal of Weisbord to present his "views" before it. And rightly so. We have nothing in common with such "views". It would have been a disgrace if a single delegate had expressed any doubts on this question. For our part, if we have to choose between the out-and-out Stalinist henchman who defends everything and the camouflaged apologist who blunts the edge of criticism—if we have to choose between the one who justifies the crimes and the one who "submits that they are exaggerated"—we prefer the former. It is best to have enemies out in the open. And if they conceal themselves behind the pretence of "adherence to the International Left Opposition" it is all the more necessary to drag them into the open.

THE DRESSMAKERS' SYMPOSIUM.

The symposium held last Sunday under the auspices of the "Dressmakers' United Front Committee" represents a step forward. Under certain conditions it can become the starting point of the revival of the militant union movement in the industry and a stimulus to the

left wing labor movement in general. The "United Front Committee", as everybody knows, is under the leadership of the Stalinists. It is a long way from their mad hounding campaign of yesterday against everyone who differed with the official party in the slightest degree to today's polite invitation to all factions to meet together and talk things over. This inconsistency only reveals once more the instability of Stalinist policy, in the trade union field as elsewhere. It does not alter the correctness of the action in calling the symposium. Every revolutionary worker in the trade—and in the first place the group of the Left Opposition—should welcome and support and strengthen this trend.

The leaflet issued by the committee, inviting the workers to the symposium, is well worth reading—especially by those who want to check up on the issues of controversy on trade union policy in the Party and, consequently, in the Left wing labor movement. The leaflet says: "The present state of affairs in our industry is, to a very large extent, the result of the split and the artificial division in the ranks of the workers which the bosses are taking advantage of." In our opinion this statement is incontestable—even though it was written by, or at the direction of, people who made a virtue, and even a fetish, of the split at the last convention of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. And following that there is another complete right-about-face, when the leaflet says: "Dressmakers representing all shades of opinion will be called upon to come and present their views and proposals..." (Our emphasis). On this point also the leaflet is just as correct as yesterday's sectarianism was false.

How were the inflexible leaders of the Party induced to approve such a complete reversal of policy? The answer is simple. In this instance, as always, they did it under the whip of necessity. The results of the old approach have been so catastrophic that further steps on that road became impossible. Even a blind man knows he has reached a blank wall when he bumps his head against it. When it came to the point that the Kaufman gang of boss-and-police agents were able to appropriate the slogan of "unity" and make fun of the left wing workers in the fur trade, a revolt from below against the suicidal policy of the leadership was no longer to be avoided. It was this logic of events and the pressure of the workers that persuaded the bureaucrats to approve the symposium and the properly-worded invitation to it. The criticism of the Opposition played its part in enlightening the workers, a part which would have been greater and would have brought results sooner if, while remaining entirely loyal to the Party, it had been sharper, more aggressive and more ruthless against the leadership. Stalinist bureaucrats cannot be cured with kindness.

An interesting question arises: Does this action in the dressmakers' signify a deliberate change of policy motivated by a principle conception, or is it merely a panicky "goat-leap" in an isolated case under the compulsion of necessity? Most likely the latter. Centrists in general are incapable of following a consistent line of policy, and still less a principled one. They live from day to day, attempt to solve each problem separately and move one way or the other according to the pressure of the moment. Hence their repeated contradictions, the attempt to escape from which only leads to others. This is the case right now with their policy toward trade unions and non-party mass organizations in general. If they have purchased a respite in the dressmakers' situation by the policy implied in the conduct of the symposium it is only at the price of multiplying their complications in the broader field.

Here is their dilemma: If the policy of the symposium is defended as a correct one, if they claim that it represents a worked-out line, then it must be applied generally. But such a general application would bring them to a head-on collision with their present course in the other mass organizations where yesterday's policy in the dressmakers' still survives, and with similar results. They are crying out loud these days to the effect that the skeletons of left wing trade unions must take on the flesh and blood of membership and that such organizations as the I. L. D. must be transformed into "mass organizations." But such a consummation must logically presuppose—since only a comparative few of the workers are as yet Communists—that other workers are given a chance to live and breathe and feel at home there, that "all groups and shades of opinion"—to quote the invitation to their symposium—are made free to "present their views and proposals."

But this is precisely what their fear of criticism and discussion impels them to deny, as the expulsions in the Marine Workers' Union and the I. L. D. so eloquently testify. This is one of the reasons why the "mass movements" do not materialize, or if they do take momentary shape as a result of a spontaneous activity of the workers they are quickly wrecked. The bureaucratic regime narrows down and defeats the movement everywhere. A regime of workers' democracy, which is the prerequisite for the healthy growth and development of the Left wing organizations in the labor movement, is at the same time incompatible with the survival of a leadership by appointment and command. All the Browders are stranded on this contradiction. —J. P. C.

WATCH FOR DATE OF MILITANT DANCE

From an I.L.D. Our Own Interview with Ben Gitlow Delegate

NEW YORK.

Logic is a most consistent touchstone—but experience is more so. Facts make logic genuine. For about a year or so I have been reading *The Militant*. My ideological knowledge of Communism being in a sorry state, somewhat akin to Earl Browder's education along party lines, my political attitude was undetermined, vacillating. The logic as presented by *The Militant* seemed logical enough. My mind was turning towards Marxism-Leninism, but my feet as yet resisted—until—October 11, 1931, when I attended the I. L. D. "Mooney-Harlan-Scottsboro" conference as a duly accredited delegate.

This meeting was an eye-opener and also affected my mind. The bureaucratic manner, the steam-roller tactics employed, the railroading through of motions, was, to say the least, disgusting. No open election of a chairman, no open election of a credentials committee; all appointed by the leadership, this smelled of the sewer, but the absolute refusal to seat non-party or sympathetic delegates, smacked of the A. F. of L. cesspool. But to cap the climax, one smirking, wash-faced bureaucrat, rattling in his master's empty shoes, had the colossal effrontery, the brazen gall, to threaten to report back to that delegates' local his actions at the conference and thereby to have him thrown out of the local and possibly out of his job! All this before a Communist audience. But this is not all. After the district organizer of the I. L. D., Carl Hacker haranguing his audience after the fashion of a William Green, proposed a motion to put four delegates, refused seats, out of the hall, and the Stalinist myrmidons began to applaud frantically, one bellicose individual, seeing me not applauding, turned towards me with threatening gestures and even went so far as to poke me in the side, meanwhile saying, "Why don't you applaud?", thereby trying to force me to justify the criminal motion of the D. O. . . .

As soon as the expelled four left the hall, or rather were forced to leave (they were threatened to be thrown out by force), I left the hall in disgust. At any event, a change in the party must take place, if it must prevent being smashed. The day draws near and the rope hangs high for the Stalinist misleaders. —A CONFERENCE DELEGATE

The Opposition at Party Forum

NEW YORK.

The Communist Party's New York forum on Sunday, October 17, at their headquarters was attended also by two members of the Left Opposition and their experience is worth recounting. William Weinstein was the speaker on the subject "Capitalism or Socialism—Which Road Out of the Crisis?" Except for two important points his speech was the usual one, that of contrast of the Soviet Union with the capitalist world.

The first point of interest was Weinstein's constant repetition of the necessity of the use of the united front tactic by the party, before it could hope to organize the American working masses. He likewise pointed this out for the English Communist Party. But Weinstein's explanation of what he meant by the united front was "penetrating the shops and uniting the workers against their enemy, the bosses" (!). The second point centered on Weinstein's remarks on conditions in the Soviet Union today. "No strikes take place," said Weinstein, "because the workers don't go on strike. If they are dissatisfied with conditions in their factory, they simply move and shift from one factory to another, as was pointed out in the latest decree on wages and by comrade Stalin in his speech before the Xth Plenum." For an analysis of this question of migration of workers from job to job, see comrade Trotsky's article on Stalin's speech in *The Militant*.

I took the floor and endeavored to state some of the tasks of the Communists in this present crisis, upon which point the speaker had concluded. Stressing the question of unemployment relief, the immediate importance of the slogan and demand for unemployment insurance. I also emphasized the slogan of the six hour day and five day week without reduction of wages, and the slogan of the extension of long term credits to the Soviet Union by the United States, as one of the means for the development of economic relations between the two countries and the amelioration of thousands of unemployed in the United States, etc. I stated also that there were demands of the Left Opposition, of which faction I was a member; and that these were some of the tactical questions on which we differed from the position of the official party. There was no disturbance when I spoke and evidently these correct slogans had aroused some thought and questions in the minds of the workers present.

When I sat down, several workers around me questioned me about the Communist League (Opposition). I gave cards advertising our forum to them. One Young Communist League member took the floor and warned the audience to beware of "social demagogy". About a third of the audience applauded him. Following him, one confused young chap took the floor and argued against our slogan of the six hour day on the basis of its inapplicability in the jewelry industry!

Discussion was closed with one or two additional speakers and then Weinstein proceeded to answer a number of questions. Comrade Morris and myself went downstairs and proceeded to distribute free copies of *The Militant*. We had given away about 30 without any difficulty.

We notice by the current issue of the *Revolutionary Age* that it has scooped the whole labor press with an exclusive interview, obtained at great cost and travail, granted to a special correspondent by . . . Ben Gitlow. We are told that "your correspondent took the initiative in interviewing Gitlow . . . he stated . . . he stated further . . . Gitlow further stressed . . . he further stated" and so on and more of the same. We were naturally deeply chagrined at having been beaten to the draw by the *Age* in so difficult, and yet so important, a matter as an interview with Gitlow. How the correspondent got to him and managed to turn the trick, continues to mystify us beyond words. In a feeble attempt to stage a comeback, we will evocatively try to emulate the enterprising and successful staff of the *Age* by publishing a wholly imaginary interview with the same Gitlow. The fact that our interview was never given is no great shakes as an argument; the truth of the matter is that Gitlow would have been better off if he had not given any interview at all in this place.

WE: What is your general view of the present situation, Mr. Gitlow?

BEN: These are times which try men's souls. What is needed is a concrete program of action adapted to the physiology of the American working class. We stand foursquare on the platform of pasteurized Leninism.

WE: What is going to come out of the crisis in this country?

BEN: It is clear to all of us that one of two things will happen for sure: the crisis will either blow over, or it will not blow over. In the meantime, things look pretty bad. What we need is less theory and more action. Theory is all right in a way. I used to make speeches about it myself years ago. But as Marx said, we need action and a mass labor party.

WE: What about the socialist party?

BEN: We have nothing against the socialists. Some of my best friends are socialists. I was once a socialist myself. But it appears to us that the Socialist Party is getting too conservative. We need a new party, a more radical party. We stand for that, too.

WE: What about the Left wing in the Socialist party?

BEN: These are times which try men's souls. Live and let live. We are against the stupidity of the Communists. We

are against the stupidity of the Norman Thomas group. We are against stupidity altogether. We also stand against Moscow dictation if it's we that are dictated to. The Communist International is a noble experiment.

WE: What has happened to your own International, Mr. Gitlow?

BEN: We are against foreign intervention. We stand foursquare with the father of our country: no entangling foreign alliances! Slam for the Slimes! America for the Americans! Russia for the Stalinists! See America first! From the sunny pines of Florida to the evergreens of Maine, we must build up the united front of all the workers. Brandler is a nice fellow. I met him once. Some of my best friends are Brandlerites. We believe in live and let live.

WE: What do you think of Stalin and the Five Year Plan?

BEN: Stalin is a nice fellow. I met him in Moscow. I was once a delegate to the Communist International. Stalin is a Russian, but he is also a leader of men. He invented the Five Year Plan, although Lenin invented Leninism. Bucharin is also a nice man. Sometimes I find it hard to say which of the two is nicer. But they ought to let the Americans work out their own historic destiny. What does Stalin know

The Party on the Philippines

In a declaration (*Daily Worker*, 10-23-31) addressed to the Communist Party of the Philippine Islands by the Central Committee, Communist Party of U. S. A., a large share is devoted by way of advice to the Philippine comrades on the lessons afforded by the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27. The declaration refers to "especially the treacherous role of the bourgeois nationalists, the butcheries of workers and peasants by the Kuo Min Tang and the servility of its factions to one or the other of the imperialist bandits," all of which, it appears, has finally become known to the American Communist Party. The years are not so many, however, since the Stalinized Communist International and its American lackeys, saw in these bourgeois "nationalists" the leaders of the Chinese Revolution, permitted the butchery of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry in order not to break up the grotesque "united front" of the "bloc of four classes," and deliberately held back the agrarian uprisings. The resolution of the Comintern in those stirring days said: "The apparatus of the national revolutionary government (of Chiang Kai-Shek) offers a very real road to solidarity with the peasants". Chiang Kai-Shek was hailed as a "warrior against imperialism". Many little Stalinists—the Browders and Neumanns—were in China in these days to avow such theories and thereby to aid in the treacheries to and butcheries of the workers and peasants.

"Above all else," continues the declaration to the Philippine Communist Party, "the lessons of China should teach the Filipino masses the danger of following the leadership of the national bourgeoisie which chatters of 'opposition to imperialism' . . . the example of China should prove to the Filipino workers and peasants the imperative need of their own revolutionary mass movement, organizationally and politically independent of and opposed to the vacillating and compromising leadership of the national bourgeoisie, their own movement which is positive of success only when led by the proletariat whose guide and leader is the Communist Party of the Philippine Islands."

But, we ask in all humbleness, have the American Communist Party and its Browders really accepted these ideas in regard to China and which they now advise for the Philippines?

Does the American Communist Party, in defiance of the conceptions of Stalin, Bucharin, the Vth Congress of the Comintern, now agree with the Left Opposition that the subordination of the Communist Party to the Kuo Min Tang was unqualifiedly wrong; that the acceptance of the leadership of the Chinese revolution placed a noose around the necks of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry and the young Communist Party? Or do we have a case of Love-stonian exceptionalism in upside down form? Does the American Central Committee have one theory regarding the role of a Communist Party in China and another for the Philippines? Perhaps, like Minor, the comrades will change their minds a little more. —A.

about the situation in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union? You can't expect him to know anything about it. He is too busy with Russian problems. Russia has many problems. All the Russians are busy with them. We are busy with ours. When the Five Year Plan is completed we have every reason to believe that it will come to an end. Then there may be another Five Year Plan. We do not know for sure, but whatever happens is all right with us. We stand foursquare on the platform of Marx: Live and let us live. The American workers are very backward and we must keep up with them. The Five Year Plan is a great success. We say: Long live the Soviet Union! Quote me if you like.

WE: What do you think of Trotsky?

BEN: Trotsky has made a lot of mistakes. Trotsky is not Stalin. Stalin is not Lenin. Lenin was not Bucharin. In one word, that sums up the situation, although we hope that better times are ahead. That is the position of the Communist Party of the United States (Majority Group). These are times that try men's souls. Trotskyism is not Leninism. One is Trotskyism and the other is Leninism. I met Lenin once at the Third Congress. He was a nice fellow. He was a Russian too. The Russians are all right for Russia. Trotsky didn't fit into the Russian situation. That's why he's in Turkey now. Turkey is a semi-feudal country, bounded on the North by the East by Afghanistan and on the West by the Bosphorus. It is populated mainly by Turks who eat halvah. Trotsky is a sectarian. He does not know the situation in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers union. There is quite a struggle there between Hillman and Orlofsky. I wrote an article about it, but Trotsky hasn't written any. We are not sectarians. We make alliances with anybody except with the Communists. They are stupid. We are against stupidity. I said that in one of my other answers.

WE: What about the Paterson—

BEN: Glad you called. Have a cigar—a friend of mine from Havana makes them up for me. Drop in to see me again some day.

Banking Crisis in the United States

(Continued from page 1)

months has kept the percentage of "frozen" paper from increasing. The Hoover National Credit Corp., will probably not be of much help to the banks as a whole, but will transfer some of the excessive strength of the stronger banks to the weaker ones, helping along the process of concentration and monopolization of finance-capital. The turn from the stage of crisis to the stage of depression, whenever it comes, will "thaw out" some of the assets of those weaker banks who can survive, or be kept alive, between now and that time. The most probable variant is a continuance of an abnormal number and size of bank failures, but not on a scale that will threaten American finance-capital as a whole.

3. The price of bonds has an immediate bearing on the position of the banks. Many bank failures have been due to a decline in the value of bond investments to a point where the surplus was wiped out and the capital impaired, under which conditions a bank is technically insolvent, has no right to accept further deposits, and must close down. Bond prices have recovered since the first week in October—the campaign of wage-cuts, by increasing the surplus values accruing to industry, has strengthened the standing of bonds whose interest is paid out of such surplus values, and the anticipation of wage-cuts on the railroad bonds, which constitute the largest single group of bond investments next to government bonds. A renewed intensification of the industrial crisis toward new depths will of course reverse this tendency; in the absence of present indications of such a turn, the most probable variant appears to be a stabilization of the value of the investment assets of the banks.

The immediate perspective of the American banking crisis, based on these valuations, is one of increased hegemony over industry, of increasing monopolization nationally, and of maintaining its international position, through the maintenance of the gold standard, to a point where America can go forward, under the leadership of its oligarchic finance-capital and its highly developed and monopolized industry, toward imperialist expansion and inevitable conflict with the declining imperialism of England and the rising capitalism of France.

—B. J. FIELD.

Unite in Unemployed Relief Struggle

(Continued from page 1)

There could be no better way of actually preventing a mass basis of struggle for the unemployed. The social reformists will thus have a free field to rally all those workers who in vain search for a job are turning away from their capitalist ideology, but are not yet ready to join the "revolutionary unions". In that broad field the social reformists can continue to sow their seeds of illusion and deceit. But it is precisely also in that field that a united front struggle around the burning issues of unemployment as well as the very question of Communist activities has such rich potentialities." (*The Militant*, July 26, 1930).

However, despite this present recognition by the party leadership, it proceeds yet essentially on the same basis. It is now intensifying the activities of hunger marches and connecting it with publicly arranged hearings on the misery of unemployment. This serves to emphasize the needs of the unemployed but still ignores the essential aspect of the needs of the class. When standing alone it lends itself to facilitate all the efforts of capitalism to separate the unemployed from the employed and to isolate the struggles of the former.

It is necessary for the Communist movement to fight relentlessly for mitigation of the misery of unemployment. It must, however, be to provide for the maximum of working class unity. It is necessary to repeat again that in this field especially there is an opportunity of a broad united front policy. It is the one where the most elementary class objectives, aspirations and activities of the workers can be united. The recent A. F. of L. convention again demonstrated its servile capitalist character and refused to consider even the need of unemployment insurance. So much more should that now be considered an opportunity to press forward for Communist leadership on this issue. An actual united front foundation for the unemployed movement embracing also the A. F. of L. unions would be a good beginning. —ARNE SWABECK.

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