

IN THE INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR

Reviews and News of the Working Class and Revolutionary Movements

The Political Crisis of Japanese Imperialism

(Continued from page 1)

country. The restless masses demand action. The assassins of Inukai point to one road of action.

The transportation of whole armies from the Shanghai scene in the direction of the Soviet border, taking place with the alleged intention of putting down the guerilla warfare, makes an attack against the Soviet Union a rather easy target for the aims of the military clique and the reactionary mass support they are receiving in the country. In the whole Manchurian adventure, the Tokyo government has from time to time seen itself forced to merely register and approve of acts perpetrated by the irresponsible and unhampered militarists. The ascent of the Selyukai to power was supposed to bring the government more into harmony with the line of action taken by the militarists. The incidents of last week seem to indicate that the military are on the rampage again, this time going over the heads even of the acknowledged leaders of the military cliques, like the Minister of War, Araki. An attack against the workers' republic is on the order of the day.

The Danger of War

Once the military has succeeded in starting a war against the Soviet Union, the support of the entire bourgeoisie will be solidly behind them. The bourgeois knows what choice he has. The assault precipitated by the Japanese militarists can easily be amplified into a conflagration, in which the capitalists of all the major countries will participate. The same depression that grips Japan is likewise holding sway over the other bourgeois nations. Only a spark is needed to bring about an explosion, the effects of which are hardly calculable.

Against the War Danger in U. S.

For us in America, as well as for the Communists everywhere, the struggle against imperialism war is the most important task of the day. Mass demonstrations, mass rallies, parades led by the Communist party, in which the fight against the war danger has had a prominent part, have received a great response from workers all over the country. But it is not enough to demonstrate, it is not enough to propagandize against war. It is necessary to give the anti-war sentiment of the workers a solid organizational form.

It is in this sense that the struggle against the war danger cannot be divorced from the daily activities of the Communists in the fight for the majority of the working class. To really give the struggle against imperialism slaughter concrete shape, it is necessary to penetrate the factories, the shops, the trade union organizations. It is necessary to confront and to influence the workers at their places of work and wherever they meet. That is the only way of assuring their fighting solidarity in case of war. The Communists have to prove to the worker from day to day that they deserve to be followed, that they are really the vanguard of the workers. That alone will give them the opportunity to lead the workers against the imperialist war mongers. Otherwise, without the tested and trusted leadership of the Communists, the strong sentiment of the masses against war can easily be dissipated and directed into channels harmless for the enemy class.

That is why the Left Opposition has fought so tenaciously against the isolationist policies of the Stalinist leadership of the official Communist party, that is why we have rejected the disastrous theory of social Fascism, that is why we have struggled against the harmful slogan of the united front "from below", that is why we have fought for a correct trade union tactic, for a genuine united front policy which unites all workers for common action and serves as the best battle ground of the Communist against the reformists and all the other fakery and misleaders of the workers.

The dangerous international situation today, the danger facing the Soviet Union requires with all the greater urgency, the return on the part of the Communist party to the line of Lenin, to the method of work prescribed by the first four congresses of the Communist International. There is no short-cut to leadership of the masses. And only under Communist leadership can the struggle against war as well as all other struggles of the workers be carried on successfully.

Greet the Return

OF OUR CLASS WAR PRISONERS
MORGENSTERN AND GOODMAN

at
THE PICNIC

to be held at
TIBBETTS BROOK PARK Plot 8
Sunday, May 29th, 1932

After languishing in one of the most vermin infested jails in the entire United States; after ninety days of isolation in a Capitalist dungeon; after days wasted in prison misery and nights spent in prison horror our comrades Bernard Morgenstern and Leon Goodman will be with us again to enjoy whatever liberties are begrudgingly granted us by the powers that be.

Comrades and Revolutionists:
Out to the Picnic!

The Reactionary Theory of Socialism in One Country

Nine Years of the Struggle of the Left Opposition

The fundamental question which divides the Marxian wing of the movement from the Centrists and the Right wing is the theory of socialism in one country. On the one side of this theory stand nationalism and utopianism; on the other side stand we, the internationalists and scientific socialists. In its essence, this theory of the official leaders is no less profoundly important than the issues which divided the old Second International into its Right and Left wings.

Although it is not new to the movement as a whole, the theory of socialism in one country was introduced into the Communist movement for the first time in 1924. Prior to that date, it was not only absent from the literature of the revolutionary Communist movement, but our teachers specifically rejected and mocked it at it time and time again. Marx and Engels polemicized it in so many words. Not a line can be found in the writings of Lenin to be adduced in its defense. The program of the Bolshevik party, the banner under which it directed the October revolution, does not contain a mention of this "theory". The program and statutes of the Young Communist League of Russia, adopted in 1921, takes special care to refute the idea. Not one single sentence can be found in any of the fundamental documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International to refer to the possibility of building up a socialist society in one single country, and a backward agricultural country like Russia at that. The first draft for a Comintern program, presented to its Fourth Congress by Bucharin and Thalheimer, does not mention the theory or the idea by even the vaguest reference. Whole passages can be found in the writings of the principal proponents of the theory—Bucharin and Stalin (their writings before 1924, of course) which argue directly against this reactionary notion.

In a word, not one solitary theorist or authentic spokesman and defender of Marxism, from Marx himself down to Stalin, can be found who, up until 1924, ever had a word to say in defense of this idea. How and why, then, did it come to be propounded, and finally to be incorporated into the fundamental program adopted at the Sixth Congress?

How the "Theory" Arose

The date with which this theory is inseparably connected stamps it for what it really is. The theory was first promulgated by Stalin in 1924 in the second edition of his pamphlet called "The Theory and Practice of Leninism". We emphasize the second edition, because in the first Stalin still repeated what was the common knowledge and belief of all Marxists up to then. He said in the first edition:

"It is (the proletariat's) most important task—the organizing of socialist production—still remains unsolved. Can these tasks be solved can the final victory of socialism be won without the joint efforts of the proletariat of several highly developed countries? No, this is impossible."

In the second edition, with virtually nothing else of the text changed, we already find that the passage quoted above has been altered to read:

"After the victorious proletariat of one country has consolidated its power and has won over the peasantry for itself, it can and must build up the socialist society."

From this somewhat cautious, but sufficiently clear formulation, the Stalinists have since expressed themselves in the most unrestrained and fantastic manner. Today, for example, we are told by them, on the basis of this theory, that the task which will be accomplished at the end of the second Five Year Plan is:

"... To liquidate entirely all the elements of capitalism, etc., etc., down to active builders of a socialist classless society." (Freiheit, March 7, 1932.)

The Effects of October 1923

Now let us look into the theory itself. It came into existence, as we have mentioned, in 1924, and not by accident. The year 1924 was one filled with tremendous consequences for the intervention, a revolutionary movement. It was the culminating point of the insurrectionary high-tide of the post-war years and the beginning of the momentary stabilization of the bourgeoisie achieved with the aid of America's gold. The German revolution of October 1923 had been cruelly defeated without having fired a shot. The month previously, the insurrection in Bulgaria had ended with a crushing defeat and extermination of the Communist movement. Three months later, the putsch in Reval (Eschonia) disastrously failed to realize the vain hopes put in it by the Communists. This rapid succession of defeats gave the harrassed bourgeoisie the "breathing space" it was looking for. The second edition of a world war situation created by the French occupation of the Ruhr was brought to an end. Everywhere, the setbacks suffered by the proletarian vanguard was felt deeply, and the pitiful attempts of Zinoviev, Stalin, Bandler and Bucharin to depict the situation as though the revolution, the struggle for power was still on the order of the day, only served to deepen the disillusionment of the advanced workers. This mirage dissolved quickly. Reality made itself felt only too plainly. The intervention of the United States and the adoption of

the Dawes Plan, with its subsequent "stabilizing" of Germany and temporary regulation of Europe's imperialist antagonisms, soon revealed that the revolutionary wave had subsided, that the battalions of the proletariat had been weakened, that adjustments had to be made to the brief "democratic pacifist era".

How to make these adjustments? The responsible Marxists proposed that the Communists, particularly in Central Europe must once more set about to win the masses of the workers in the struggles around daily issues, that the masses had once more to be assembled in the everyday struggle so that when the next series of convulsions gripped bourgeois society, the Communists would be in a better position to take the offensive in the direct struggle for power. There was no ground for pessimism, said the leaders of the Left Opposition. In a series of penetrating analyses, comrade Trotsky showed at that time that America's intervention in Europe, which involved at the outset a brief stabilization, was only accumulating a mountain of powder magazines which would inevitably blow up with the resounding crash of war and proletarian revolution.

The Stalinist "Adjustment"

How did the official apparatus envisage the adjustments that had to be made following the German defeat and America's intervention? By the apparatus, we refer above all to its most perfect representative, Stalin, all of whose activity in the Russian revolutionary movement has been characterized, and still is, by an opportunist, narrow-minded nationalism. He proposed to solve the problem by turning the back of the Russian republic upon the international revolution and concentrating all attention to the "problems at home". The banner of international revolution, according to the Stalin school, was to be hauled and replaced with the slogan of "socialism in one country".

What ideas lurked at the back of Stalin's head to nurture this theory? The idea that the proletarian revolution in Europe had been taken off the order of the day for an incalculable period; that it had been postponed for decades; that the most profitable efforts could be concentrated in enclosing and constructing a national socialist Utopia there. Losovsky, expressing the thoughts that prevailed in the minds of the bureaucracy at that time, wrote that the stabilization of Europe was a matter of decades. And if that were the case, why continue this "infernal babble" about "international revolution" which will not take place for a long time anyway, especially when there is so much to be "done at home"?

The Theory as a Fruit of Pessimism

In other words, the theory of socialism in one country—that is, the fantastic idea that Russia, by itself and without the aid of the victorious workers in culturally more advanced countries, can build up a classless society—was born out of the womb of pessimism, of a defeatist state of mind. It was born and bred in an atmosphere of reaction, and that brand can no more be removed from it than the mark of Cain could be wiped from his forehead.

Nothing that has ever been said can refute this characterization of the origin and essence of the theory. The dispute is no academic occupation of closet philosophers and professional hair-splitters. It is a vitally important theoretical question which has a concrete, practical significance of tremendous scope. Together with comrade Trotsky, the Left Opposition argued that to build a socialist society in the Soviet Union, the aid of the workers' revolution in a more advanced country or countries would be required. Together with Stalin and Bucharin, the international apparatus of the Comintern argued that a socialist society could be built up without the

"state aid" of the workers in other countries. If this dispute has a "practical" significance—and it has an enormous one—then the conclusion is an obvious and a disastrous one.

Why? Because socialism is not built in one day. Only petty bourgeois anarchists believe that the "free society" will be established on the morrow of the overthrow of the bourgeois state. The Marxists know, as Lenin wrote, that "the road of organization is a long road, and the task of socialist construction demands a long drawn, stubborn work and real knowledge which we do not possess to a sufficient degree. Also the next generation, which will be further developed, will probably hardly be able to achieve the complete transition to Socialism" (Vol. XV, page 240). If you believe, as Stalin does, that this "long road" is to be fully travelled "alone", before the workers in the other countries have overthrown their bourgeoisie, then you have postponed—at least in your thoughts—the world proletarian revolution for an indefinite period.

The Essence of the Opposition's Struggle: Marxian Internationalism

The Opposition believed and declared: The proletarian revolution in the West is far closer to a realization than is the abolition of classes and the establishment of a socialist society in Russia. If it is not closer, then the proletarian revolution in Russia is doomed! This truth Lenin repeated a thousand times: "We do not live merely in a state but in a system of states and the existence of the Soviet republic side by side with imperialist states for any length of time is inconceivable." (Vol. XVI, page 102.) In this is contained not one grain of "pessimism" or "disbelief in the revolution"; it is penetrated with a realistic Marxian internationalism.

And what is this internationalism? It is no mere loose sentimental bond of solidarity uniting the workers of all countries. It arises directly out of the development of capitalist world economy. The imperialist stage of capitalism, its expansion on an international scale, the tremendous and vital importance of exports and imports for the maintenance of capitalism, monopolies extending to the ends of the earth, the mutual dependence of one country upon developments in another—these are some of the phenomena of world economy. Capitalism has not matured for the socialist revolution in this or that country, large or small, backward or advanced. It has matured for socialism on a world scale. This fact not only creates the basis for a living internationalism, but also for the transformation of the old society by a victorious world proletariat.

But if each country can build an enclosed socialist society by the efforts and resources of its own proletariat, then internationalism becomes an empty phrase for holiday resolutions. If it can be done in backward Russia, then surely it can be done in more advanced Germany, and in France, and England, and certainly in the United States. Then what need have the Communists for a highly-centralized international of their own?

Internationalism As A Necessary Development

Furthermore: the development of all existing society up to now, and particularly of modern capitalist society, has been towards increasing inter-relationships and inter-dependence. Capitalism reaches its highest stage of evolution, it develops to its most majestic economic heights, not by retiring into its respective national shells, but by projecting from each national territory those links which bind it inseparably to the rest of world economy. The countries of the most backward culture, technique, living standards are those that play the smallest role in world economy and trade; and vice versa.

Now, socialism assumes a vastly higher stage of development than capitalism, a higher culture, technique and living standard. It means not only the abolition of classes, but the elimination of the differences between worker and peasant between town and country, the abolition of agriculture by the fact of its industrialization. But this, in turn, means that a socialist society must develop to a much further point along the economic and technical (that is, the cultural) road than capitalism. The theory of socialism in one country implies (and its spokesmen state explicitly) that this is to be accomplished by taking the road back from capitalist evolution which was, as every baby knows, directed towards an increasing economic inter-dependence and inter-relationship on a world scale. The Marxists, in contradistinction to this reactionary, utopian idea, declare that the road to socialism presupposes an increasing participation in world economy, not only in the future socialist world economy, but right now, in the capitalist world economy which still exists, the economy to which, according to Lenin, "we are subordinated, with which we are connected and from which we cannot escape."

What Internationalism Requires

In the U. S. S. R.

But if, in spite of everything, the proletarian revolution in the West is nevertheless delayed in coming? What shall we do then: give up the power in the Soviet Union? This is the "annihilating" argument the Stalinists present as their pitiful defense of an indefensible theory. Not at all! Lenin and Trotsky, who never believed in the utopia of national socialism, stood for seven years at the head of the proletarian dictatorship and never once proposed to "give up power". What they did and what the Left Opposition proposes to do today, is to retain the power in the first fortress to be conquered by the proletariat. In this fortress, while looking forward to the assistance of the workers in other countries to strengthen the position of the proletarian and socialist elements in the country against the capitalist elements, this means the utilization of "both levers": at the command of the proletariat: the long lever of the international revolution and the shorter lever of laying add strengthening the foundations for a socialist economy at home. What it certainly does not mean is that the Russian proletariat and peasantry shall be deceived with the grandiose illusion that at the end of five more years "socialism will have been established"; for there will be terrific consequences to account for when the awakening takes place.

The pernicious theory of national socialism has already had the most serious effects for the proletarian dictatorship in Russia. On its basis, Stalin and Bucharin for years fought against the plan proposed by the Opposition for the industrialization of the country and the collectivization of agriculture. The bureaucrats were little interested in "Five Year Plans" then—they were too busy strangling the Opposition inside the party and saying to the kulak on the outside: "Enrich yourself!" And when under the pressure of events and the criticism of the Opposition, they finally adopted a radical plan, it was once more on the basis of this reactionary theory that they proceeded to "liquidate the kulak as a class" by administrative decrees and to establish a classless socialist society by a certain date on the calendar as if it were a prize contest that closed on a given day in the month. But a detailed description of these phases of the Opposition's struggle in the Communist International and in the Russian party specifically, we must leave for other articles in this series.

And it is not merely in Russia that this theory had fatal effects for the proletarian revolution. It should be borne in mind that the revisionists always included a tiny "if" in their theory. Socialism "if" could be built up in one country "if" military intervention from the foreign imperialists could be prevented. "Socialism in one country" kept undermining the possibilities of success of the great Chinese revolutionary movement of 1925-1927 and of the upheaval in the British working class in 1926. In the latter case particularly, did the "if" of the theory—the prevention of military intervention—play a thoroughly fatal role. We can trace the disgraceful conduct of the apparatus leaders during the British miners' and general strikes directly to this theory. An account of the events in England in 1926 and the part played in it by the Stalinists and the Left Opposition—an episode of fundamental importance in our nine years of struggle—we shall seek to give in the next issue.

—MAX SHACHTMAN.

SPARTACUS YOUTH CLUB

The Spartacus Youth Club in New York, as already announced, has changed its meeting date to Friday evenings. The executive committee of the club is arranging an educational program for the coming weeks which will be of interest to young workers and students. At its next meeting, May 20, there will take place a discussion on the results of the recent French and German elections.

From Left Oppositionists in South America

Call, Columbia
April 28, 1932.

Dear comrades:

In this city, as well as in the rest of the country, the political struggles of the working class are going on accompanied by the same mistakes and setbacks brought about by the absurd and absolutely detrimental leadership of the fanatical Stalinists about two years ago there arrived in Colombia comrade Guillermo Hernandez Rodriguez, where, a three years' stay in Russia, after it is said, he studied at the Marxist school at Moscow. He came as the accredited delegate of the Communist International to start and to lead the Communist Party of Colombia as a section of the C. I. On his arrival he was welcomed and hailed by a group of revolutionary workers who had formerly participated in the political struggles of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. We took a firm position, rejecting the policies of the traditional parties, which had left us with defeats and disasters behind us, desiring to obtain a class struggle political training in order to be able to correctly organize the party of the workers in Colombia.

Under these circumstances and with these desires, we hailed delegate Hernandez Rodriguez, accepting his political positions and the line he proposed for us to follow. Under his leadership, there was organized the committee of the Valle. Meanwhile, comrade Hernandez went to Bogota, the capital of the republic, to organize the central committee of the party, which was effected by a meeting that is known under the name of "El Ampliado". After some work had been accomplished in the capital, Rodriguez returned together with comrade Ines Martell to the Valle district with the object of implanting a solid political base in this section of the country which they considered of the greatest revolutionary importance. A series of meetings were held that were attended by workers and sympathizers. As the comrade delegate took advantage of his position as representative of the C. I. and wanted to impose his authority too rigidly, he came into conflict with the workers assembled. But, notwithstanding this fact, he was able to persuade a small group of comrades who were rather impressed with his Russian experiences, to submit to his authority.

Starting out with this group, he proceeded to expel all those who were not ready to comply with his dictatorial leadership. But since these expelled comrades were sincere revolutionaries (Continued on page 4)

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