

EDITORIAL NOTES

The Right Wing in a Blind Alley

The secret unity negotiations between the Party bureaucrats and Lovestone revealed once more the unprincipledness and the cynicism which the disciples of Stalin bring to all important questions...

If the unfinished horse trade stamps the rabid campaign of the Stalinists against the Right "renegades" with insincerity—and thereby serves to discredit it—the effect on the position of the Lovestonites is still more annihilating.

The collapse of the Right wing on an international scale is undoubtedly the chief reason for this move to give up the separate organization in America.

He says: "Within a few hours of the appearance of the Daily Worker article (the statement of the Political Bureau against him—Ed.) resolutions equally denunciatory began to pour in without a single person asking if I had anything to say, and before it was possible to become acquainted with the issues which had been raised. (This) is an indication of the automatic, unthinking way in which the Party machine operates and churns out its approval of resolutions."

Yes, that is the way it is done—the automatic, unthinking way. It has been going on for a long time now, and it is not without reason and explanation. The Pruslanization of the Party—enforced by those who abuse the good faith of the members and their confidence in the Comintern—was necessitated by the reactionary struggle against those who truly represent the ideas and the tradition of the Russian revolution.

This philosophy can draw no comfort from the catastrophic situation of the International Right wing. Bucharin in the Russian party capitulated to Stalin. A number of the most prominent Brandlerists in Germany have gone over to the new Socialist Labor Party, while Brandler and Thalheimer knock patiently at the door of Stalin.

The Case of J. T. Murphy

The sensational resignation of J. T. Murphy from the Communist Party of England, coinciding with a furious campaign against him in the official press is a striking illustration of the fearful instability of the Centrist regime. Just think: Murphy was one of the founders of the Party, and an outstanding member of the Central Committee.

The case of Murphy also illustrates how irresistibly, over what apparently contradictory roads and even through the instrumentality of the most hostile persons, a correct political idea will make its way. Murphy lived politically, he maintained his position in the leading staff for years, by virtue of his readiness to repeat every slander against Trotsky, to condemn every idea of the Opposition as counter-revolutionary.

Murphy has not become a supporter of the platform of the Bolshevik-Leninists. Far from it. Not in a day, nor even in a year, can a man cleanse his mind of the accumulated filth and poison deposited through nine years of servile acquiescence to the epigones' reaction. But not even a Murphy, it seems, could remain wholly indifferent to the havoc that Stalinism has wrought in the British Party.

Lo and Behold!—the first idea that came to him was one that had been elaborated long ago by those whom he had expelled and slandered: the idea of economic collaboration with the Soviet Union and long term credits.

Was Murphy ignorant of the source and origin of the idea that brought his downfall in the Party? It is not impossible. The denunciation of the Opposition became such a routine matter for the funkeys of Stalin that many of them found it unnecessary to read what they condemned. Here again the epigones elucidate the Bolshevik method reversely. If the revolutionary Marxists carefully study the works of all their opponents and report them conscientiously in order to refute them as they really stand with the greater precision, the Stalinists, for whom Marxism is nothing but a false-face, require an unheeding ignorance of every viewpoint except the official one.

Murphy has issued a statement on the affair, a copy of which appears in the British New Leader for May 20. In this statement he throws some light on the method of "ideological mobilization" which he did a full share to bring to full bloom in the Party, and which is now brought into play against him.

Ed.: Resolutions equally denunciatory began to pour in without a single person asking if I had anything to say, and before it was possible to become acquainted with the issues which had been raised. (This) is an indication of the automatic, unthinking way in which the Party machine operates and churns out its approval of resolutions."

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Trotsky on the Disarmament Conference

In view of the serious political changes in Europe during the last few weeks, such as the elections in France and the fall of the Bruening government, the Lausanne conference, which is scheduled to be held in the middle of June, takes on special importance. In this light, the following remarks by comrade Trotsky, made in an interview he granted the Chicago Daily News at the time of the current Geneva conference, are of particular interest for Communists and for all revolutionary workers.

In Reply to Questions Posed by the Chicago Daily News

(1) The fundamental cause of the crisis may be defined by a single word: capitalism. The specific character of this crisis is explained by another concept: imperialism, that is to say, monopoly capitalism which is beginning to putrify within its own insoluble contradictions. The rise and fall of Ivar Kreuger symbolizes all of capitalism today. The official moralists are hurling their thunder against the match king after the event. But he could have replied to them: why have you permitted me to dispose, according to my own wishes, of the productive forces, which under the direction of a humane society, ought to serve society itself?

Will the capitalist world order survive the present crisis? The reply depends upon what is understood under the term crisis. Variations in the conjuncture accompany the entire history of capitalism. In the past periods, the curve of capitalism rose throughout all the variations of the conjuncture. Today, it is declining. This does not exclude variations of the conjuncture in the future. On the contrary, these are inevitable. But the present acute crisis can only be so attenuated that it will culminate into a higher paroxysm in the next immediate stage. This whole tragic process can only end in the transformation of the whole social system.

(2) Have I any hope of success at the disarmament conference? Not the least. But in this, I am not an exception. The French project is sufficiently characterized by the fact that it has been presented by the Tardieu government. At the same time that France supports the bloody work of Japan in the Far East, Japan gratefully supports the pacifist initiative of France at Geneva. An incomparable lesson for all peoples! The project of France provides for the creation, under the mantle of the League of Nations, of a new entente with the one aim of stabilizing the hegemony of French finance capital with the aid of an "international" army.

But the American project also does not open any perspective. Present day

N. Y. Opposition Offers Cooperation in Elections to the Communist Party

District Party Election Campaign Committee. Dear Comrades: The New York branch of the Communist League of America endorses the Presidential election campaign of the Communist Party, its national and local candidates.

Last year, our delegates were also refused participation in the Conference. Nevertheless, we conducted a series of open air meetings all during the local campaign, in which we called upon the workers to vote for the candidates of the Communist Party. Through our press and other means, we continued to speak on the same line.

No formal ousting will ever suffice to stop our activities for our Party, of which we are still a faction and in which we work as such. We will undertake all assignments given to us—which we hope to receive by return mail. If none are officially given, we will again carry out activities as we did last year and before.

Comradely yours, HERBERT CAPELIS, New York Branch of the Secretary Communist League of America (Opposition)

BOUND VOLUMES OF PAMPHLETS FOR SALE Bound Volumes of the following pamphlets by comrade Trotsky are now ready for sale: The Draft Program, Strategy of the World Revolution, World Unemployment and the Five Year Plan, Problems of the Development of the U. S. S. R., The Turn in the C. I. and the Situation in Germany, Germany—The Key to the International Situation, The Spanish Revolution, The Spanish Revolution in Danger, and Communism and Syndicalism. All these are bound in one volume.

DANGERS OF WORKERS' BUREAUCRACY

We know from older books that workers' bureaucracy and workers' aristocracy is the social foundation for opportunism. In Russia this phenomenon has taken on new forms. On the foundation of the dictatorship of the proletariat—in a backward country—surrounded by capitalism—for the first time a powerful bureaucratic apparatus has been created from among the upper layers of the workers, that is raised above the masses, that lays down the law to them, that has at its disposal colossal resources, that is bound together by an inner mutual responsibility and that intrudes into the policies of a workers' government its own interests, methods and regulations.

We are not anarchists. We understand the necessity of a workers' government and therefore the historical inevitability of a bureaucracy during a transitional period. But we likewise understand the dangers that are inherent in this fact, particularly for a backward and an isolated country. The idealization of Soviet bureaucracy is the most shameful mistake that can be made by a Marxist. Lenin strived with all his might to raise the party as a self-acting vanguard of the working class above the governmental apparatus in order to control, check, direct, and, purge it, placing the historical interests of the proletariat—international, not only national—above the interests of the ruling bureaucracy.

THE FUNCTIONARY REPLACES THE BOLSHEVIK

But what has happened in the subsequent period? The entire leading stratum of the party and of the government that was at the helm during the revolution and the civil war has been replaced, removed and crushed. Their place has been taken by an anonymous functionary. At the same time the struggle against bureaucratism which was so acute in character during Lenin's lifetime, when the bureaucracy was not yet out of its diapers, has ceased entirely now when the apparatus has grown sky high.

And indeed, who is there capable of carrying on this struggle? The party as a self-controlling vanguard of the proletariat no longer exists now. The party apparatus has been fused with the administrative. The most important instrument of the general line within the party is the G. P. U. The bureaucracy not only prohibits the criticism of the top from below but it prohibits its theoreticians from even talking about it and from noticing it. The mad hatred of the Left Opposition is aroused first of all by the fact that the Opposition talks openly about the bureaucracy, about its particular rôle, and its interests, thus revealing the secret that the general line is inseparable from the flesh and blood of the new nationalistic ruling stratum, which is not at all identical with the proletariat.

From the proletarian character of the government, the bureaucracy deduces its right of primogeniture to infallibility: how can the bureaucracy of a workers' state degenerate! The state and the bureaucracy are thereby taken not as historical processes but as eternal categories: how can the holy church and its god-inspired priests sin! Yet, if a workers' bureaucracy which raised itself over the proletariat, waging battle in a capitalist society, could degenerate into the party of Noske, Scheidemann, Ebert and Wels, why can't it degenerate after raising itself over the victorious proletariat?

The ruling and uncontrolled position of the Soviet bureaucracy is conducive to a psychology which in many ways is directly contradictory to the psychology of a proletarian revolutionist. Its own aims and combinations in local politics as well as in international politics are placed by the bureaucracy above the tasks of the revolutionary education of the masses and without any connection with the tasks of international revolution.

Centrism «in General» and the Centrism of the Stalinist Bureaucracy

by LEON TROTSKY

(Continued from last issue)

In the meantime this same functionary bears the least resemblance to an incorporeal spirit. He eats and guzzles and procreates and grows himself a respectable pot-belly. He lays down the law with a sonorous voice, handpicks from below people faithful to him, remains himself faithful to his superiors, prohibits others from criticizing himself and sees in all this the gist of the general line. Of such functionaries there are a few million. A few million! Their number is greater than the number of industrial workers in the period of the October revolution. The majority of these functionaries never participated in the class struggle which is bound up with sacrifices, self-denials and dangers. These people in their overwhelming mass were politically born already in the qualification of a ruling caste. They are backed by the state power. It assures them their livelihood and raises them considerably above the surrounding masses. They know nothing of the dangers of unemployment, if they are gifted with the capacity to stand at attention. The grossest errors are forgiven them as long as they are ready to fulfill the rôle of the sacrificial scape-goat at the required moment, and thus remove the responsibility from the shoulders of their nearest superiors. Well, then, has this ruling stratum of many millions any social weight and political influence in the life of a country? Yes or no?

We know from older books that workers' bureaucracy and workers' aristocracy is the social foundation for opportunism. In Russia this phenomenon has taken on new forms. On the foundation of the dictatorship of the proletariat—in a backward country—surrounded by capitalism—for the first time a powerful bureaucratic apparatus has been created from among the upper layers of the workers, that is raised above the masses, that lays down the law to them, that has at its disposal colossal resources, that is bound together by an inner mutual responsibility and that intrudes into the policies of a workers' government its own interests, methods and regulations.

These breakneck zig-zags would have been impossible, were it not for the fact that within all Communist sections a self-sufficient bureaucracy—i. e., independent of the party—had been formed. Here is the root of all evil!

WHEREIN LIES THE STRENGTH OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The strength of a revolutionary party consists in the independence of its vanguard which checks and selects its cadres and while educating its leaders, gradually elevates them by its confidence. This creates an unbroken connection between the cadres and the mass, between the leader and the cadres and it induces in the entire leadership an inward confidence in themselves. There is nothing of the kind in the contemporary Communist parties! The leaders are appointed. They handpick their aides. The rank and file of the masses is forced to accept the appointed leaders, around whom there is built up the artificial atmosphere of advertisement. The cadres depend upon the upper crust and not upon the underlying masses. Consequently, to a considerable degree they seek for the source of their influence as well as for the source of their livelihood outside of the masses. They draw their political slogans not from the experience in the struggle, but by telegraph. And in the meantime Stalin's files secrete incriminating documents against possible emergency. Each leader knows that at any moment he can be blown away like a feather.

COARSENESS AND DISLOYALTY CHARACTERIZE THE BUREAUCRAT

Thus, throughout the entire Comintern a closed bureaucratic stratum is being created which represents in itself a culture broth for the bacilli of centrism. While organizationally it is very stable and solid, for it is backed by the bureaucracy of the Soviet state, the centrism of the Thaelmanns, Remmes and Co., is distinguished by extreme instability in political relations. Bereft of assurance, which can be derived only from an organic jointure with the masses, the infallible C. E. C. suffices only for monstrous zig-zags. The less it is prepared for a serious ideological battle, the more proficient it is in profanity, insinuations, and calumnies. Stalin's portrait, "coarse" and "disloyal", as described by Lenin, is the personification of this layer.

The characterization of bureaucratic centrism given above determines the attitude of the Left Opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy: a complete and unqualified support in so far as the bureaucracy defends the boundaries of the Soviet republic and the foundations of the October revolution; an outspoken criticism in so far as the bureaucracy hinders by its administrative zig-zags the defense of the revolution and of socialist construction; a merciless resistance in so far as it disorganizes by its bureaucratic overlordship the struggle of the international proletariat.

—L. TROTSKY.

(From WHAT NEXT—Vital Questions for the German proletariat)