

The Road to Socialism

THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC BLIND ALLEY; THE SOVIET SUCCESSES AND THE GERMAN SITUATION; ECONOMIC COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE U. S. S. R. AND GERMANY. THE UNITED FRONT WITH THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY AGAINST THE PAPER MILITARY-BONAPARTISTIC DICTATORSHIP

From the Series of Articles in the Forthcoming Book 'The Only Road' :- by Leon Trotsky

KAUTSKY and Hilferding, among others, have declared more than once in recent years that they never shared the theory of the collapse of capitalism which the revisionists once ascribed to the Marxists and which the Kautskyans themselves now frequently attribute to the Communists.

The Bernsteinians outlined two perspectives: one, unreal, allegedly orthodox—"Marxian", according to which, in the long run, under the influence of the internal antagonisms of capitalism its mechanical collapse was supposed to take place; and a second, "realistic", according to which a gradual evolution from capitalism to socialism was to be accomplished. Antithetical as these two schemas may be at first glance, they are nevertheless united by a common trait: the absence of the revolutionary factor. While they disavowed the caricature of the automatic collapse of capitalism attributed to them, the Marxists demonstrated that under the influence of the sharpening class struggle, the proletariat would carry through the revolution much sooner than the objective contradictions of capitalism could lead to its automatic collapse.

This dispute was carried on as long ago as the end of the present century. It must however be acknowledged that the capitalist reality since the war, approached, in a certain respect, much closer to the Bernsteinian caricature of Marxism than anyone might ever have assumed, above all—the revisionists themselves: for they had only portrayed the spectre of the collapse in order to bring out its unreality. Nevertheless, capitalism proves in actuality to be closer to automatic decay the more delayed is the revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in the destiny of society.

The most important component part of the theory of collapse was the theory of pauperization. The Marxists contended with a certain caution that the sharpening of the social antagonisms need not necessarily be equivalent to an absolute sinking of the standard of living of the masses. In reality, it is this latter process which is experiencing its unfoldment. Wherein could the collapse of capitalism express itself more acutely than in chronic unemployment and the destruction of social insurance, that is, in the refusal of the social order to feed its own slaves?

The opportunistic brakes in the working class have proved to be powerful enough to grant the elementary forces of outlived capitalism additional decades of life. As a result, it was not the idyl of the peaceful transformation of capitalism into socialism which took place, but a state of affairs infinitely closer to social decay.

The responsibility for the present state of society, the reformists sought for a long time to shift upon the shoulders of the war. But in the first place, the war did not create the destructive tendencies of capitalism, but only brought them to the outside and accelerated them; secondly, the war would have been unable to accomplish its work of destruction without the political support of reformism; thirdly, the hopeless contradictions of capitalism are preparing new wars from various sides. Reformism will be unable to shift the historical responsibility from itself. By paralyzing and curbing the revolutionary energy of the proletariat, the international social democracy invests the process of the capitalist collapse with the blindest, unfruitful, most catastrophic and bloodiest forms.

Of course, one may speak only conditionally of a realization of the revisionist caricature of Marxism, applicable to a definite historical period. The way out of decaying capitalism, however, will be found, even if after a great delay, not upon the road of the automatic collapse but upon the revolutionary road.

The present crisis has swept aside with a final flourish of the broom the remnants of the reformist utopias. The opportunist praxis at the present time possesses no theoretical covering whatsoever. For in the long run it is pretty much a matter of indifference to Wels, Hilferding, Grzesinski and Noske as to the number of catastrophes that will still hurtle down upon the heads of the masses of the people, if only their own interests remain immune. Only, the point is that the crisis of the bourgeois régime strikes at the reformist leaders, too.

"Act, state, act!" the social democracy still cried a short while ago, as it fell back before Fascism. And the state acted: Otto Braun and Severing were kicked into the street.—Now, wrote the *VORWAERTS*, everybody must recognize the advantages of democracy over the régime of dictatorship.—Yes, democracy has substantial advantages, reflected Grzesinski while he made the acquaintance of prison from the inside.

From this experience resulted the conclusion: "It is time to proceed to socialization!" Tarnow, yesterday still a doctor of capitalism, suddenly decided to become its grave-digger. Well, where capitalism has turned the reformist ministers, police chiefs and lord lieutenants into unemployed, it has manifestly exhausted itself. Wels writes a programmatic article: The hour of socialism has struck! There only remains for Schleicher to rob the deputies of their salary and the former ministers of their pension—and Hilferding will write a study on the historic rôle of the general strike.

The "Left" turn of the social democratic leaders startsle one with its stupidity and deceitfulness. This by no means signifies, however, that the maneuver is condemned in advance to failure. This party, laden with crimes, still stands at the head of millions. It will not fall of its own accord. One must know how to overthrow it.

The Communist party will declare that the Wels-Tarnow course towards socialism is a new form of mass deception, and that will be correct. It will relate the history of the social democratic "socializations" of the last fourteen years. That will be useful. But it is insufficient: history, even the most recent, cannot substitute for active politics.

Tarnow seeks to reduce the question of the revolutionary or the reformist road to socialism to the simple question of the "tempo" of the transformations. Deeper a theoretician cannot sink. The tempo of the socialist transformations depends in reality upon the state of the productive forces of the country, its culture, the extent of the overhead imposed upon it for defense, etc. But socialist transformations, the speedy as well as the slow, are possible only if at the summits of society stands a class interested in socialism, and at the head of this class a party which does not dupe the exploited, and which is always ready to suppress the resistance of the exploiters. We must explain to the workers that precisely in that consists the régime of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

Only, even this does not suffice. Once it is a question of the burning problems of the world proletariat, one should not—as the Comintern does—forget the fact of the existence of the Soviet Union. With regard to Germany, the task today does not lie in commencing a socialist construction for the first time, but in tying together Germany's productive forces, its culture, its technical and organizational genius with the socialist construction already in process in the Soviet Union.

The German Communist Party confines itself to the mere eulogizing of the Soviet successes, and in this connection commits gross and dangerous exaggerations. But it is completely incapable of linking together the socialist construction in the U. S. S. R., its enormous experiences and valuable achievements, with the tasks of the proletarian revolution in Germany. The Stalinist bureaucracy, on its part, is least of all in a position to render the German Communist Party any assistance in this highly important question: its perspectives are limited to one single country.

The incoherent and cowardly state capitalistic projects of the social democracy must be countered with a *general plan for the joint socialist construction of the U. S. S. R. and Germany*. Nobody demands that a detailed plan should be worked out instantly. A preliminary rough draft suffices. Foundation pillars are necessary. This plan must as speedily as possible be made the object of action by every organization of the German working class, primarily of its trade unions.

Into this action must be drawn the progressive forces among the German technicians, statisticians and economists. The discussions about planned economy so widespread in Germany, reflecting the hopelessness of German capitalism, remain purely academic, bureaucratic, lifeless-pedantic. The Communist vanguard alone is capable of drawing the treatment of the question out of the charmed circle.

The socialist construction is already in progress—to this work a bridge must be thrown over the state frontiers. Here is the first plan: study it, improve it, make it concrete! Workers, elect special planning commissions, charge them with entering into contact with the trade unions and economic organs of the Soviets. On the basis of the German trade unions, the factory councils and other labor organizations, create a central planning commission which has the job of entering into contact with the Gosplan of the U. S. S. R. Draw into this work German engineers, organizers, economists!

This is the only correct preliminary to the question of planned economy, today, in the year 1932, after fifteen years of the existence of the Soviets, after fourteen years of convulsions of the German capitalist republic.

Nothing is easier than to ridicule the social democratic bureaucracy, beginning with Wels, who has struck up a Song of Solomon to socialism. Yet, it must not be forgotten that the reformist workers have a thoroughly serious attitude to the question of socialism. One must have a serious attitude to the reformist workers. Here the problem of the united front rises up once again in its full scope.

If the social democracy sets itself the task (in words: we know that!), not to save capitalism but to build up socialism, then it must seek an agreement not with the Center but with the Communists. Will the Communist party reject such an agreement? By no means. On the contrary, it will itself propose such an agreement, demand it before the masses as a redemption of the only now exhibited socialist change.

The attack of the Communist party upon the social democracy must proceed at the present time along three lines. The task of demolishing Fascism retains all its acuteness. The decisive battle of the proletariat against Fascism will signify simultaneously the collision with the Bonapartist state apparatus. This makes the *general strike* an indispensable fighting weapon. It must be prepared. A special general strike plan must be worked out, that is, a plan for the mobilization of the forces to carry it out. Proceeding from this plan, to unfold a mass campaign. On the basis of this campaign, to propose to the social democracy an agreement for the carrying out of the general strike under definite political conditions. Repeated and made concrete at every new stage, this proposal will lead in the process of its development to the creation of the *Soviets as the highest organs of the united front*.

That Papen's economic plan, which has now become law, brings the German proletariat unprecedented poverty, is recognized in words also by the leaders of the social democracy and the trade unions. In the press, they express themselves with a vehemence they have not voiced for a long time. Between their words and their deeds lies an abyss, we know that well,—but we must understand how to pin them down to their word. A *system of joint measures of struggles against the régime of emergency decrees and Bonapartism must be elaborated*. This struggle imposed upon the proletariat by the whole situation cannot, by its very nature,

LEON TROTSKY

Proletariat and Peasant War in China

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expressing the hope that—under a correct policy—it will be possible to fuse the workers, and the urban movement, in general, with the peasant war; and this would constitute the beginning of the third Chinese revolution. But meanwhile this still remains only a hope and not a certainty. The most important work lies ahead.

In this letter I should like to pose only one question, which appears to me, or at any rate from the distance, to be important and acute to the greatest degree. Once again I must stress that the information at my disposal is altogether insufficient, accidental and disjointed. I would indeed welcome all amplifications and corrections.

THE PEASANT ARMY AND THE INDUSTRIAL CENTERS

The peasant movement has created its own armies, has seized upon great territories, and has placed at their head its own institutions. In the event of further successes—and all of us, of course, passionately desire such successes—the movement will become linked up with the urban and industrial centers and through that very fact it will come face to face with the working class. What will be the nature of this encounter? Is it certain that its character will be peaceable and comradesly?

At first glance the question might appear to be superfluous. At the head of the peasant movement stand Communists or sympathizers. Is it not self-evident that in the event of their coming together the workers and the peasants must unanimously unite under the Communist banner?

Unfortunately the question is not at all so simple. Let me refer to the experience of Russia. During the years of the civil war the peasantry in various parts of the country created its own guerrilla detachments, that sometimes grew into whole armies. Some of these detachments considered themselves Bolshevik, and often had workers at their head. Others remained non-party and most often had at their head former non-commissioned officers from among the peasantry. There also was an "anarchist" army under the command of Makhno. So long as the guerrilla armies operated in the rear of the White Guards, they served the cause of the revolution. Some of them were distinguished by exceptional heroism and trustworthiness. But within the cities these armies often came into conflict with the workers and with the local party organizations. Conflicts also arose during the encounters of the partisans with the regular Red Army, and in some instances they took on a painful and an acute character.

The grim experience of the civil war demonstrated to us the necessity for disarming peasant detachments immediately after the Red Army occupied those provinces that were purged of the White Guards. The best, the most class-conscious and disciplined elements were on the occasion absorbed into the ranks of the Red Army. But a considerable portion of the partisans strived to maintain an independent existence and often came into direct armed conflict with the Soviet authority. Such was the case with the anarchist, entirely kulak in spirit, army of Makhno. But that was not the sole instance; many peasant detachments, which fought splendidly enough against the restoration of the landlords, became transformed after victory into the weapons of counter-revolution.

PEASANTS' OUTLOOK AND THE WORKERS

The conflicts between armed peasants and workers, no matter what their origin was in each isolated instance, whether called forth by the conscious provocation of the White Guards, or by the tactlessness of the Communists or by an unfavorable concatenation of circumstances, had underlying them one and the same social soil: the difference between the class position and the bringing-up of the workers and of the peasants. The worker approaches questions from the socialist standpoint; the peasant's viewpoint is petty bourgeois. The worker strives to socialize the property that is taken away from the exploiters; the peasant seeks to divide it. The worker desires to put to common use palaces and parks; whereas as the peasant, insofar as he cannot divide them, leans toward burning the palaces and cutting down the parks. The worker strives to solve problems on a national scale and in accordance with a plan; the peasant, on the other hand, approaches all problems on a local scale, and is inimical in his attitude to the plans from a center, etc., etc.

It is understood that a peasant also is capable of raising himself to the socialist viewpoint. Under a proletarian régime ever larger masses of peasants become educated and brought up in the

A Letter to the Chinese Bolshevik-Leninists

socialist spirit. But this requires time, years, even decades. When one deals with the initial stages of the revolution, then the contradictions between proletarian socialism and moujik individualism often take on an extremely acute character.

But is it not a fact that at the head of the Chinese Red Armies are none other than Communists? Doesn't this alone exclude the possibility of conflicts between the peasant detachments and the workers' organizations? No, that does not exclude it. The fact that individual Communists stand at the head of the peasant armies does not at all transform the social character of the latter, even if the Communists at the head bear a definite proletarian stamp. And how do matters stand in China? Among the Communist leaders of the Red detachments there are undoubtedly to be found many declassé intellectuals and semi-intellectuals who have not gone through the severe school of proletarian struggle. In the course of two or three years they live the lives of partisan commanders and commissars, they wage battles, seize territories, etc. They absorb the spirit of the environment that surrounds them. Meanwhile the majority of the rank and file Communists within the Red detachments consists, indubitably, of peasants, who assume the name Communist in all

honesty and sincerity but who remain in actuality revolutionary paupers or revolutionary petty proprietors. He is lost who judges in politics according to denominations and labels and not according to social facts. All the more so when the matter deals with politics in which hands are equipped with weapons.

THE DANGER OF PEASANT-WORKER CONFLICTS

The true Communist party is the organization of the proletarian vanguard. One must not forget that the working class of China during the last four years has been held in an oppressed and amorphous condition and only recently does it evince signs of reviving. It is one thing when the Communist party, firmly leaning upon the flower of the urban proletariat, strives through the workers to lead the peasant war. It is an altogether different thing when a few thousand or even tens of thousands revolutionists assume the leadership of the peasant war and are in reality Communists or take on the name, without having serious support from the proletariat. This is precisely the situation in China. This acts in the extreme to augment the danger of conflicts between the workers and the armed peasants. In any event, there will be no dearth, one may rest assured, of bourgeois provocateurs. In Russia, in the epoch of civil war, the proletariat was already in power in the greater part of the country; the leadership in the struggle was in the hands of a strong and tempered party; the entire commanding apparatus of the centralized Red Army was in the hands of the workers. Notwithstanding all this, the peasant detachments, incomparably weaker than the Red Army often came into conflict with it, after it victoriously moved into the sector of peasant partisanship.

In China the situation differs radically, and thereto entirely to the disadvantage of the workers. In the most important regions of China the power is in the hands of bourgeois militarists. In other regions, in the hands of armed peasants. Proletarian power is as yet nowhere. The trade unions are weak. The influence of the party among the workers is insignificant. The peasant detachments flushed with knowledge of victories they have achieved stand under the wing of the Comintern. They call themselves, "The Red Army", i. e., they identify themselves with the armed forces of the Soviets. What results consequently is that the revolutionary peasantry of China, through the medium of its ruling stratum, seems to have accrued to itself beforehand the political and moral values which should by the nature of things belong to the Chinese workers. Isn't it possible that things may turn out so that all these values will be directed at a certain moment against the workers?

Of course, the peasant poor—and in China they constitute the overwhelming majority—to the extent to which they think politically—and these compose a small minority—sincerely and passionately desire alliance and friendship with the workers. But the peasantry, even when armed, is incapable of directing an independent policy.

BOURGEOISIE LEADS OR PROLETARIAT

Commonly occupying as it does an intermediate, indeterminate and vacillating position, the peasantry, in decisive moments, can follow either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. Its road to the proletariat the peasantry does not find so easily and only after a series of mistakes and defeats. The bridge between the peasantry and the bourgeoisie is composed by the urban petty bourgeoisie, chiefly by the intellectuals, who commonly come forward under the banner of Socialism and even Communism.

The commanding stratum of the Chinese "Red Army" has no doubt succeeded in cultivating in itself the psychology of commanders. The absence of a strong revolutionary party and of mass organizations of the proletariat make control over the commanding stratum factually impossible. The commanders and commissars appear in the guise of absolute lords of the situation and upon occupying cities will be rather apt to look down from above upon the workers. The demands of the workers might often appear to them either inopportune or ill-advised. Nor should one forget such "trifles" as the fact that within cities, the staffs and the offices of the victorious armies are established not within the proletarian slums but within the finest buildings of the cities, within the houses and apartments of the bourgeoisie; and all this facilitates the inclination of the upper stratum of the peasant armies to feel itself as a part of the "cultured" and "educated" classes, nowise the proletariat.

(To Be Continued)

The Lytton Report

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vers for an invasion of Manchuria have been replying in the Tokyo war offices for several years, is not even considered by these august gentlemen. But then again, Japan may have to take a leading part in the attack against Communism for it to be harshly dealt with.

Interesting are the remarks on the question of the boycott. England still remembers the successful boycott against itself several years ago, and faced with one at the present time in India, and America constantly faced with the same threat, cannot bring themselves to ignore the question. In very diplomatic language, they question the right of one country to institute a boycott against another in times of peace.

The Soviet Union is mentioned twice. The report, as is to be expected, calls for an international conference, and suggests that the Soviet Union be included in the call. In the words of *Pravda*, they look upon the USSR as but another imperialist power. The inclusion of the Soviet Union may have some hidden purpose behind it. This only the future can tell. But of greater danger are the references to the strategic Chinese Eastern Railway. Here they speak very boldly of the inclusion of the Sino-Soviet owned Chinese Eastern into a greater Manchurian system. The designs of the imperialist powers are too obvious to be ignored.

The report concludes with the repetition of the necessity of the establishment of law and order, again stresses the danger of the growing Communist movement and the spread of the "Soviet territory", and repeats the demand for the creation of an international gendarmerie, as opposed to Japanese troops alone.

Manchukuo, puppet state of Japan, remains yet unrecognized by the major imperialist powers (except Japan). American imperialism has been instrumental in delivering this left-handed slap to Japan in the form of the Lytton report. The western bourgeoisie are withholding official recognition of Manchukuo in the hope that they will thereby be able to get a share in the booty. The working class however looks upon Manchukuo as being but the tool of the Japanese in their attempt to exploit the Chinese masses. It is therefore with great satisfaction, that we read of the official denials by Moscow of the rumors that it intended to grant official recognition to the new state. The Lytton report has attempted to lump together the Soviet Union with the imperialist powers. Now by means of a sharply defined policy exposing the aims of the American, British and Japanese bourgeoisie the workers' republic can give the lie to the above implication, and come forth as the defender of the rights of the Chinese peoples. —H. S.

VOTE COMMUNIST!

be conducted within the framework of democracy. A situation where Hitler possesses an army of 400,000 men, Papen-Schleicher, besides the Reichswehr, the semi-private Stahlhelm army of 200,000 men, the bourgeois democracy the half-tolerated Reichsbanner army, the Communist party the proscribed Red Front army—such a situation by itself lays here the problem of the state as a problem of power. A better revolutionary school cannot be imagined!

The Communist party must say to the working class: Schleicher is not to be overthrown by any parliamentary game. If the social democracy wants to set to work to overthrow the Bonapartist government with other means, the Communist party is ready to aid the social democracy with all its strength. At the same time, the Communists obligate themselves in advance to use no violent methods against a social democratic government insofar as the latter bases itself

upon the majority of the working class and insofar as it guarantees the Communist party the freedom of agitation and organization. Such a way of putting the question will be comprehensible to every social democratic and non-party worker.

The third line, finally, is the *fight for socialism*. Here too the iron must be forged while it is hot and the social democracy pressed to the wall with a concrete plan of collaboration with the U. S. S. R. What is necessary on this point has already been said above.

Naturally, these sectors of struggle, which are of varying significance in the strategical complete perspective, are not separated from each other, but rather overlap and merge. The political crisis of society demands the combining of the partial questions with the general questions: precisely therein lies the essence of the revolutionary situation.

PAIKIPO, September 10, 1932