

# The Death of the Father of Revisionism

There are few figures left in the international social democracy today who ever exercised so pronounced an influence upon it as did Eduard Bernstein, the "Father of revisionism" who just died in Berlin. With his name is inseparably associated the current which finally won the day in the socialist movement, gaining favorable recognition even from many of those who originally fought it. One of those who never reconciled herself with it, Rosa Luxemburg, summed it up more than three decades ago: "The opportunist current in the party theoretically formulated by Bernstein is nothing but an unconscious endeavor to assure the upper hand to the petty bourgeois elements who have come over to the party, to remodel the practice and the aims of the party in their spirit. The question of social reform and revolution, of final goal and movement is on the other hand the question of the petty bourgeois or the proletarian character of the labor movement."

Bernstein came to prominence in the German social democracy during its heroic days. At the head of the party stood the popular tribunes, Bebel and Liebknecht. The movement had been strengthened by the unity of the two factions—Lassalleans and "orthodox" Eisenachers—even if at a sacrifice of clarity which provoked the classical polemic of Marx against the Gotha program. Not even the exceptional laws of the Bismarck regime were able to prevent the party from forging ahead.

### Friendship with Engels

It was during this period that Bernstein was entrusted with the editorship of the central party organ, *Der Sozialdemokrat*, which was published in Switzerland (later in London) for illegal distribution in Germany. The confused views he expressed in its columns at the outset did not bring him much praise from Marx and Engels who, from England, followed the continental movement with unflinching attention. But the young editor finally managed to establish closer relations with the founders of the movement, particularly with Engels, after meeting with them in London.

From that time on, Engels was able to maintain much more intimate contact with the *Sozialdemokrat*. Under his tutelage, Bernstein guided the paper in a manner so true to the ideas of the two London exiles as to cement a firm and almost unbroken friendship with Engels. The latter energetically supported Bernstein's views in Zurich against the dubious conduct, criticized in the *Sozialdemokrat*, of the social democratic Reichstag fraction—even when a split threatened the party. In 1885, engrossed in the work of completing the unfinished manuscript of Marx, he wrote to Bernstein as if in anticipation of the fact that the rising writer was to become his literary executor: "For the moment we have a lot against us. Bebel is sick and, as appears, discouraged. I too cannot help as I should like to until I am finished with Marx's manuscript. So the burden of the struggle falls upon you and Kautsky. But do not lose sight of the old rule: because of the present of the movement and the struggle, not to forget the future of the movement. And that belongs to us."

Bernstein proved to be unworthy of the trust placed in him. He seems to have been organically indisposed to maintain a revolutionary standpoint, and the period of Engels' decisive influence turned out to be a fleeting episode in his life. His long exile in England during the Bismarckian epoch had brought him into intimate association with the British labor movement, such as it was. It was then in the process of emerging from the "romanticism" of the militant Chartist days. The might of British imperialism weighed mountain-heavy upon the working class and most particularly upon its leadership. The successful Liberal-Labor politicians, the respectable members of the Fabian Society, the "practical," conservative trade union leaders—all of these created the environment which reawakened all the reformist inclinations dominant in Bernstein when he first joined the social democracy. Upon his return to Germany, he had already shaken off the revolutionary teachings of Marxism. In the interests of his restored convictions, he utilized the first opportunity to pay back Engels in forged coin for the confidence placed in him.

### Bernstein's "Fine Trick"

Engels had just then (1895) written a foreword to a German edition of Marx's "Class Struggles in France". It was a bold reaffirmation of the proletarian right to revolution. At the same time it pointed out that under the prevailing conditions the old tactics of barricade by militant minorities were unfavorable for the working class. What was required at the moment was the consolidation of the proletariat under the socialist banner, utilizing the legality which the bourgeoisie was compelled to grant. Bernstein, together with Wilhelm Liebknecht and the other party elders—terrified at the prospect of new exceptional laws with which the bourgeoisie threatened the party—chopped up this foreword in such a manner as to arouse Engels to a fury. His protesting letters were of no avail (he died practically a few days later) and the forged introduction was transmitted to the new socialist generation as proof that Engels had revised his whole revolutionary outlook at the last moment. On this day the reformists have played the falsified words of Engels as their trump card, but fortunately Engels lived just long enough to make clear his views. "X... (Bernstein) has just played me a fine trick," he wrote to Lafargue on April 3, 1895. "He has taken from my introduction to Marx's articles on the France of 1848-1850 all that could be of use to him to support the tactic of peacefulness and anti-violence at all costs which he has been pleased to preach for

## Eduard Bernstein's 'Triumph' Over Militant Marxism

some time now, especially at the present moment when the coercive laws are being prepared in Berlin. But I advocate this tactic only for the Germany of today, and even then with substantial reservations. For France, Belgium, Italy and Austria this tactic, taken as a whole, cannot be followed and for Germany it may become inapplicable tomorrow."

Engels did not revise his revolutionary conceptions. But it is likely that at the last moment he did revise his judgement of Bernstein. As for the latter the Berlin falsifications were a sort of springboard for the whole revisionist movement which he launched more formally a year and a half later. By that time he was freed from the vigilance of a living Engels, whose injunction "not to lose sight of the old rule" left no trace upon him.

### The Father of Revisionism

In October 1896, he commenced a series of articles on the problems of socialism in the theoretical organ of the German party, *Die Neue Zeit*. Towards the end of his then still cautiously worded observations, he wrote the sentences which were to become bywords of the revisionist movement. "I admit openly that I attach extraordinarily little sense and interest to what is commonly understood by the 'goal of socialism'. This goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me, the movement is everything, and by the movement I understand the general movement of society, that is, social progress, as well as the political and economic agitation and organization for the bringing about of this progress." Although he explained later in his autobiography—when a storm of discussion broke over his head—that by these words he meant only that he had no interest in Utopias, he soon left no doubt in anybody's mind that under the heading of Utopia he meant the social revolution.

Bernstein was more than a child of his epoch: he was the clearest and boldest spokesman for it. He set down the fundamental guiding lines of social reformism in a far more rounded-out manner than even his spiritual and practical predecessor, the former radical and post-Bismarckian apostate, George von Vollmar who first scandalized the party with his patriotic speeches. The situation was as if specially created for the appearance of Bernsteinism on the scene. The Exceptional Laws of Bismarck had not only been badly defeated, but the second attempt to make the social democracy illegal was unsuccessful. The party had grown considerably even during its underground days. It marched ahead from election to election, swelling its legislative representation.

Germany was well launched on her imperialist career and a new stratum of better-situated workers began to break through the social structure. Bismarck's successor, Caprivi, was introducing a number of social reforms, including the reduction of the high customs walls. The conditions of labor, at least of its upper layer, were undergoing a distinct improvement. The trade unions progressed and attracted the interest of the proletariat mass towards the practical daily questions of bread and butter, hours and wages. Even during its illegality, and more so afterwards, the party gained the adherence of countless numbers of petty bourgeois from the middle class and the intelligentsia, who saw in the social democracy the only popular democratic movement. In such an idyllic atmosphere the problem of the proletarian seizure of power seemed remote indeed, and Bernstein's pioneering for reformism did not encounter insuperable obstacles.

### The Essence of Bernsteinism

In 1899 he presented his views in a systematic and more outspoken form in a book called "Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie" (The Prerequisites of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social Democracy, published in English as "Evolutionary Socialism"). It left no front of the Marxian system unassailed. The theory of historical materialism, the dialectic method, the conception of the

class struggle, the theory of value, the Marxian crisis theory, the seizure of power—all of them encountered his opposition. He disputed Marx's contention that the capital is concentrated and centralized into even fewer hands, with the concentration of poverty at the other pole of society. The middle class was not disappearing, for there was a growth of those whose income was derived from the possession of small properties or from sharing in the benefits of corporate ownership and management. He was one of the first avowed opponents of the dictatorship of the proletariat: what sense did it have when the party representatives were increasingly active in all the popular legislative bodies in such a practical manner as stripped the term of any meaning?

The party's tactics must not be founded upon the idea of social convulsions or catastrophes; the utopia of a coming revolution must be given up. The evolution of society was moderating all the social antagonisms and class conflicts. The management and ownership of industry was being democratized, and so also—with the granting of suffrage, the legalization of the party and its growth in the Reichstag—was the political management of society. With an audacity which does not seem astounding today, but was then, he concluded by asserting that the social democracy can progress only by having the courage "to emancipate itself from a phraseology which is actually outlived, and be willing to appear as what it is today in reality: a democratic-socialist reform party".

(Concluded in Next Issue)

—MAX SHACHTMAN.

## Campaign On For Militant Subs

Our campaign for the increase of the *Militant* circulation is far from being in full swing. The forty subs received between the 10th and 24th of December do not come up to our expectation. Cities like St. Louis, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Cleveland are not represented in the record for these two weeks. A total of ten from New York or five from Chicago, or two from Minneapolis is surely not the best that can be done in these cities with strong branches and numerous connections with militant workers. If we really want the principles and policies of the Left Opposition to penetrate the party, its auxiliary organizations and the trade unions, we must spread the *Militant*. The spreading of the *Militant* is a prerequisite for such a penetration. This question should be taken up at once by every branch for discussion and the work should be organized without any delay. Also it should be borne in mind that without a substantial increase of the circulation the financial situation of our paper will remain precarious in spite of continuous contributions from the branches. Comrades, get busy.

The record for December 10-24: (Two or more)

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Chicago	5
Lynn	4
South Bend	4
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## LEON TROTSKY

# Soviet Economy in Danger

### The Situation on the Eve of the Second Five Year Plan

#### The Suppression of the Nep, Monetary Inflation, and the Liquidation of Soviet Democracy

The need for introducing the NEP, the restoration of market relationships, was determined in its time first of all by the existence of 25 million independent peasant proprietors. This does not mean, however, that collectivization even in its first stage leads to the liquidation of the market. Collectivization becomes a living factor only to the extent to which it leaves in force the personal interest of the members of kolkhozes, by molding their mutual relations, as well as the relations between the kolkhozes and the outside world, on the foundation of commercial calculation. This means that the correct, and economically sound, collectivization, at the given stage should lead not to the elimination of the NEP, but to a gradual reorganization of its methods.

The bureaucracy, however, went the whole way; at first, it might have appeared to it that it was taking the road of least resistance. The genuine and indubitable successes of the centralized efforts of the proletariat were identified by it with the successes of its a priori planning. Or to put it differently: It identified the socialist revolution with itself. By administrative collectivization it masked the unsolved problem of establishing the link with the village. Bucking up against disproportions through the NEP, it liquidated the NEP. In place of market methods it enlarged the methods of compulsion.

The stable currency unit, in the form of the chervonets, constituted the most important weapon of the NEP. While in its state of dizziness, the bureaucracy decided that it was already standing firmly with both feet on the soil of economic harmony; and that the successes of today automatically guaranteed the progression of subsequent successes; and that the chervonets was not a bridge that checked the sweep of the plan but on the contrary provided an independent source of capital funds. Instead of regulating the material elements of the economic process the bureaucracy began to patch up the holes by means of printing presses. In other words, it took to the road of "optimistic" inflation.

After the administrative suppression of the NEP, the celebrated "six conditions of Stalin"—economic accounting, piecework wages, etc.—became transformed into an empty collection of words. Economic accounting is unthinkable without market relations. The chervonets is the yardstick of the link. Of what possible use for the worker can be a few extra

roubles a month, if he is compelled to purchase in the open market the necessities of life he lacks at ten times their price?

The restoration of open markets came as an admission of the inopportune liquidation of the NEP, but an admission that is empiric, partial, thoughtless and contradictory. To label the open markets as a form of "Soviet" (socialist?) trade, in contrast to private trade and speculation is to practise self-imposture. Open market trading even on the part of the kolkhoz, taken as a whole, turns out to be speculation on the required necessities for the nearest city and by its consequences leads to social differentiation, i. e., to the enrichment of the minority of the more fortunately situated kolkhozes. But the chief place in the open market is occupied not by the kolkhozes but by individual members of the kolkhozes, along with the independent proprietors. The trading of the members of the kolkhozes, who sell their surplus at speculative prices leads to the differentiation within the kolkhozes. Thus the open market develops centrifugal forces within the "socialist" village.

By eliminating the market and by installing instead Asiatic bazaars the bureaucracy has created, to consummate all else, the conditions for the most barbaric gyrations of prices, and consequently has placed a mine both under the plan and under commercial calculation. As a result, the economic chaos has been redoubled.

Parallel to this, there has gone on the ossification of the trade unions, the Soviets, and the party, which dates back not from yesterday. Bucking up against the friction between the city and the village, against the demands from the side of various sections of the peasantry and from the side of the proletariat, the bureaucracy ever more decisively forbade any demands, protests and criticism whatsoever. The sole prerogative, which it ultimately left to the workers, was the right to exceed production tasks. Every attempt to influence from below the economic management is immediately assigned to a deviation either to the Right or to the Left, i. e., it is practically made a capital offense. The bureaucratic upper-crust, when all is said and done, has pronounced itself infallible in the sphere of socialist planning (disregarding the fact that its collaborators and inspirers turned out often to be imperial machinators and saboteurs). Thus was liquidated the basic mechanism of socialist construction—the pliant and elastic system of Soviet democracy. Face to face with economic reality and its

difficulties the bureaucracy turned out to be armed only with the twisted and rumpiled wire carcass of the plan and with its own administrative will, also considerably rumpiled.

#### THE CRISIS OF SOVIET ECONOMY

Had the general economic level, set by the first Five Year Plan, been realized only 50 percent, this in itself could have given no cause as yet for alarm. The danger lies not in the slowing down of growth, but in the growing uniformity between the various branches of economy. Even if all the integral elements of the plan had been fully coordinated a priori, the lowering of the coefficient of growth by 50 percent would have by itself engendered great difficulties because of the consequences; it is one thing to produce one million pairs of shoes instead of two millions; but it is quite another thing to finish building one half of a shoe factory. But reality is much more complex and contradictory than our hypothetical example. Disproportions are inherited from the past. Stipulations which are made by plan include in themselves inevitable mistakes and miscalculations. The fulfillment of the plan does not occur proportionately, due to the particular causes in each individual instance. The average growth of 50 percent in economy may mean that in sphere A the plan is fulfilled 90 percent, whereas in sphere B, only 10 percent; if A depends on B, then in the subsequent cycle of production, the branch A may be reduced below 10 percent.

Consequently the misfortune does not lie in the fact that the impossibility of adventurous tempos has been revealed. The whole trouble is in that the price leaps in industrialization have brought the divers elements of the plan into a dire contradiction with each other. The trouble is that economy functions without material reserves and without calculation. The trouble is that the social and political instruments for the determination of the effectiveness of the plan have been broken or mangled. The trouble is that the accrued disproportions threaten ever bigger and bigger surprises. The trouble is that the uncontrolled bureaucracy has tied up its prestige with the subsequent accumulation of errors. The trouble is that a crisis is impending with a retinue of consequences such as the enforced shutting down of enterprises, and unemployment.

The difference between the socialist and capitalist tempos of industrial development—even if one takes for comparison, the former progressive capitalism—astonishes one by its sweep. But it would be a mistake to consider as final the soviet tempos of the last few years. The average coefficient of capitalist growth results not only from periods of expansion but also of crisis. Matters are otherwise with Soviet economy. In the course of the last 8-9 years it has experienced the period of uninterrupted growth. It has not as yet succeeded in

## A Footnote to Browder's Record in the Chinese Revolution

In the *Daily Worker* of October 21, the anointed (i. e., appointed) leader of the American party, Earl Browder, directed a venomous attack upon our arrested comrade Chen Du-Hsiu, in the course of which he presented a defense of his own record in the 1925-27 Chinese revolution. Our reply to Browder was printed in the *Militant* of October 29, 1932. With numerous quotations from the official party press, we proved that not only had Browder and all the other Stalinists "failed to carry on a resolute struggle against Chiang Kai-Shek" (which Browder insists he did carry on), but quite the contrary. We showed that Chiang was covered up by the Stalin-Bucharin regime up to the day he covered up the streets of Shanghai (for the second time) with proletarian blood. Further, that the Stalin regime (Browder, of course, included) shifted its reliance to Wang Chin Wei and the Hankow government, which promptly proceeded to play the same treacherous role as Chiang had played before them.

As his defense, Browder referred to "records" which he knew were not easy to obtain. "These show," he declared, "that in April, in the period when Chen Du-Hsiu was actively and bitterly fighting for the disarmament of the workers and peasants, I wrote a statement for the All-China Federation of Labor energetically calling for the further arming of the workers and peasants and the development of seizure of the land. This statement was printed in English in the magazine *Chinese Correspondence* published at that time in Hankow."

Our answer in the *Militant* on this score read as follows: "What Browder wrote in his statement at that time, we do not know. It would be interesting to read it, of that we have no doubt. But it is not needed for an estimation of Browder's position in China during that period, for we have at our disposal fairly adequate material..."

### Browder's "Records"

Since that was written, our good English comrade H. S., who was in China during the events of which we write, sent us a copy of the "Chinese Correspondence", issued in Wuhai (Hankow), seat of the Wang Chin Wei government, under date of May 1, 1927. On page 14 and 15, we find eloquent evidence of Browder's "resolute struggle". It is in the form of a "Declaration of the Delegation of the Communist International", composed of Browder, Tom Mann of England and Jacques Doriot of France. The declaration was written in Hankow under date of April 22, 1927, that is, after Chiang Kai-Shek's coup d'Etat in Shanghai and only a short time before the unaccounted treachery of Wang Chin Wei and Co. at Hankow itself.

As for "energetically calling for the further arming of the workers and

peasants"—not a trace, not a hint of it is to be found in the declaration of this august delegation.

As for "the development of seizure of the land"—there simply is not a single word said about it in the statement of these official representatives of the Communist International.

And as for the Communist Party of China—this "trifle" is passed by without so much as the vaguest reference to its existence!

But the "resolute struggle against Chiang Kai-Shek"—what about that? The delegation refers to his counter-revolutionary coup d'Etat of more than a year before (the first one, on March 20, 1926!) and other "previous numerous acts of violation", and adds the following tearful observation, which should be engraved on tablets:

"We watched all these violent actions of Chiang Kai-Shek and his agents with great anxiety, but hoped that he would hesitate to turn a bare-faced traitor to the Nationalist movement. At this critical period of the nationalist revolution, preservation of the united front is so imperative that all crimes of those who fight against imperialism can be temporarily overlooked." (Our emphasis.—S.)

That was "resolute struggle" Number One: overlooking all the crimes of Chiang Kai-Shek who is, as we see, not the only one that is... bare-faced.

The statement continues its lament with a reference to the preceding conflict between the Central Committee of the Kuo Min Tang and Chiang, who "appealed to the Communist International to send its delegation in China to visit him". "We immediately telegraphed him..." writes the delegation, and "informed him that should he take our advice we would visit him in order to discuss the way and means of preserving the unity of the revolutionary forces in the face of imperialist attack."

That was "resolute struggle" Number Two: begging the man who was so skillfully preparing his treachery, to remain within the fold, to preserve the "unity of the revolutionary forces".

### The Comintern and Hankow

Now what about the petty bourgeois government at Hankow, which succeeded (Chiang in the affections of the Comintern, and which was at that very moment laying the basis for its own open shift into the camp of counter-revolution? Did the Comintern Delegation carry on a "resolute struggle" against it? Did it even sound a note of warning? Did it urge the masses to establish their own fighting organs to forestall the consequences of a second calamity? Here is what Browder was "energetically calling for" on April 22, 1927:

"Supported by the united forces of the village and town democracy, that is, the proletariat, peasantry and the middle classes, the Nationalist government (that is, the regime of 'comrade Wang Chin Wei', as Browder so tenderly called him then!) will be able to resist the attack of imperialism and develop the Nationalist revolution in the way which will consolidate its base in the popular masses. Then the nationalist revolution will be free from the danger of betrayal by reactionary elements..." (Bold face in the original.—S.)

The declaration ends with the slogans: "Down with Chiang Kai-Shekism!" ("Very bold slogan, now that Chiang was already massing the masses!"), "Long live the Nationalist Government! Long live the Kuo Min Tang!"

As the "nationalist revolution" was not "free from the danger of betrayal"—on the contrary, Wang promptly "betrayed" it—we can only conclude that the fault lay not with the Hankow regime but... with the "united forces of village and town democracy". It would appear that Wang "betrayed" because the masses failed to support him, as Browder urged in the course of his resolute struggle.

The whole situation is as clear as crystal. Browder—but enough of Browder; he was only an obscure agent—we mean the Stalin faction. Stalin did indeed fight resolutely against Chiang and Wang Chin Wei. But the fight began only after the horse, which Stalin helped these counter-revolutionists to mount, had ridden rough-shod over the prostrate bodies of the Chinese masses.—M. S.

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(To be continued)