

World Economic Situation Today

The question of the position of world economy today is of primary importance, and above all for Marxist revolutionists. Comrade Trotsky has proved irrefutably the connection between the strategic errors of the Comintern for the past ten years and its wrong estimations of the world situation, with its persistence in ignoring the turns which it has not foreseen.

At the present moment, the crisis has lasted over three and a half years. The working class, which up to last year had reacted only feebly to the political and economic offensive of the bourgeoisie, has let loose a powerful wave of strikes in Germany, in England, in Belgium, in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, lately in the United States. On the other hand, the crisis, which had kept increasing in sharpness day after day with little interruption from its very beginning, has entered into a period of relative calm on the world scale for over half a year; the more optimistic circles of the bourgeoisie are even beginning to speak of the coming upturn.

Are we now facing a real turn in the world economic situation? What effects may we expect of it on the strategy and the tactics of the labor movement? These are questions which justify a serious effort at an answer.

We all know that the crisis has reached a depth and a sharpness hitherto unknown. We can measure it by the number of unemployed, by the decline in production and trade, the number of bankruptcies, and a host of other indexes which show that it is not a question of an ordinary crisis such as capitalism has known ever since its birth.

But besides these quantitative indexes, we have also the qualitative signs of an internal degeneration of capitalism. The banking crisis in the United States; the falling away from the gold standard of England, the Scandinavian countries, Japan, Spain and many other countries; the unstable and even fictitious character of the gold basis of many others, notably Germany; the strangulation of the world market by a host of restrictions on the international movement of commodities and capital; the fact that the regime of the bourgeoisie can no longer afford to back up its class domination by economic and political concessions to the workers, but reveals more and more nakedly its character as the organ of capitalism; the fact, of the most fundamental importance, that a sixth of the globe, the USSR, has torn itself away from capitalist domination—all this shows that we are dealing with a crisis of a different kind than the "healthy" crises of the past.

This means that, contrary to the claptrap of the social democrats, there is not only a cyclical, but also a general crisis of capitalism. But we must also take into account the fact that the converse proposition is also true—that there is not only a general crisis of capitalism, but also a cyclical crisis. We cannot afford to lose from our sight both of these facts in our discussion of the crisis.

As Marx said in his masterly analysis in the third volume of "Capital", "...The last cause of all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as compared to the tendency of capitalist production to develop the productive forces in such a way that only the absolute power of consumption of the entire society would be their limit" (Vol. III, page 588).

The cyclical crisis is therefore not an accident, but a normal part of the functioning mechanism of capitalism. It has, in other words, a definite role to play in the capitalist economic process, which Marx has described as follows, "Crises are only violent and temporary solutions of existing contradictions, violent eruptions which re-establish for a time the equilibrium which has been destroyed."

Evidently, these alternations of stabilization or even prosperity, depression and crisis, which take place in a cycle of five, seven or eleven years, are something entirely different from the fundamental movement of capitalism as a whole, which impresses its specific character on a whole historical epoch. For instance, the half-century before the war was a period of economic progress, punctuated by crises, while the past twenty years have been in the first instance a period of economic decline.

To envisage the possibility of a period of stabilization of the cyclical crisis, followed by an upturn, in no way implies the restoration of capitalism to its former vigor, that is, the solution of the general crisis of capitalism.

On the contrary, the fundamental character of the degeneration of capitalism in the present historical epoch must put its impress on any possible recovery in capitalist economy. This means that such a recovery may be expected to be limited, temporary, uncertain, and little inclined to extend to a point where it surpasses the peaks of production and of trade recorded during the preceding boom.

In the same way as the cyclical crises of the ascending period of capitalism were, in general, short and were followed by new periods of economic upswing which made new records at each cycle, so the crises of the descending period are prolonged and followed by relatively feeble and short recoveries which would be far from reaching the high points of economic activity at-

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(*Based on a speech delivered before the Paris branch of the French section of the Left Opposition on Dec. 27, 1932.)

How It Stands Today and Its Next Perspectives

As long as the proletarian revolution has not definitely broken the back of capitalism, the latter will always have the possibility of completing its cyclical crisis, that is, of passing from the phase of acute crisis into that of depression and even to a recovery in business. What then are the conditions which make possible an improvement in world economy, and are there reasons to believe that this possibility may be realized effectively in an upturn?

It is clear that the conditions for a turn in the world situation cannot be considered from the standpoint of "pure" economy—there is no such thing. The class struggle is fought out on all fronts—economic, political, ideological and the ups and downs of the struggle on each front affect the others. Politically the net result of the period of the past ten years has been—the consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie, the set back of the proletarian offensive of 1917-21. It is painful to have to record this, but it is the truth. The responsibility of the Stalinist faction, turning the policies of the Comintern away from the road of the world revolution, the permanent revolution, and in losing much of the enormous influence and prestige within the proletariat which Communism once enjoyed, is a heavy one in this respect.

It is not only true that a series of revolutions in the various advanced or colonial countries would have rendered impossible the recovery and the relative stabilization of capitalism after 1923. But more than this—every partial victory of the proletariat led by its revolutionary vanguard, in trade union organization, in strike leadership, in the struggle for social insurance, for shorter hours, against wages

cuts and against taxes which strike the working masses hardest, weaken the bourgeoisie to that extent. It is the ravages which centrist tactics had made in this field which have permitted the bourgeoisie to carry out its policies since the crisis, without effective broad resistance from the working class.

What the policies of the bourgeoisie consist in, we know—mass unemployment, the attack on living standards and on social relief, new class taxes, the proletarianization of large sections of the petty bourgeoisie.

In the mass organizations, the workers' forces, split-up and mutually distrustful, have had to give way time after time. The social democratic leadership has been able to play its habitual and disastrous role of pacifying, lulling, putting a brake on the actions of the masses. The Communists have not been able to tear the masses away from the reformist leaders, but have weakened their possibility for action within the reformist organization by following the trade union policies of Stalin and Losovsky.

The political conditions which render possible the recovery of capitalism within the framework of the general crisis, that is to say, the possibility of throwing all the burden of the crisis on the working class by crushing or sterilizing its resistance, these conditions therefore exist.

But we must also take into account a whole series of factors of more strictly economic kind in order to be able to judge of the possibility of a cyclical upturn within the near future. The historical function of the crisis is to sweep away certain factors of economic instability which have grown out of the inherent contradictions of capitalism, and to replace them by conditions which permit of the temporary equilibrium of the system.

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 2. Theses on the Spanish situation (each of the two tendencies will work out its own theses).
 3. Project of a platform for the USSR (by the Russian section).
 4. Theses on the international situation in the sense of the organizational forms described in the theses of the first four Congresses of the C. I., as well as the adaptation of the section to the fundamental principles of a Communist organization (control of the work, collective and responsible work, etc.).
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- The Third Period Policy**
- At the height of the "third period," when the social democracy and the reformist trade unions were called "social fascist" and an integral part of the capitalist state apparatus, the German party organized its own trade union center. (It may be remarked that our American party was instructed to do likewise in the same period—the Trade Union Unity League was formed.) On November 15 and 16 at Berlin, the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition as a center of Red trade unions and opposition groups in the reformist trade unions (which would try to split off locals for the red unions) was formed. The old policy of the Leftist Communist Labor Party, condemned by the Comintern and the International of Labor Unions under Lenin and Trotsky of forming the General Labor Union which would try to destroy all reformist unions, withdraw the revolutionary and militant elements from the reformist unions, and organize "pure and simple" revolutionary unions—was revived.
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Victory or Defeat in Germany?

(We publish herewith a second article on the German situation, written by comrade Arne Swabek who is at present in Europe, close to the scene of the events which he deals with in his correspondence.—Ed.)

The course of the further developments in Germany will decide whether the epoch shall continue and finally secure the proletarian revolution or whether we shall face an entirely new epoch. This decision, of course, extends far beyond the German borders. And in either case it will spell the beginning of the end to Stalinist domination of the movement.

On the one hand it is now possible to affirm that a victorious German revolution developing out of this juncture could be accomplished only in opposition to Stalinism and in violent collision with its policies. On the other hand it is just as certain that a defeat of the working class in Germany at present and the inauguration of a new and reactionary epoch would also signal the transformation of the revolutionary movement into a new basis. Although a frightfully narrowed basis of retarded developments, it will nevertheless be one within which there will be no room for the curse of Stalinism.

The Possible Variants

The outcome of this gigantic struggle, that is in which direction the decision will turn, nobody can as yet predict. The Fascists have already gained an enormous advantage while the working class has been kept disarmed and unprepared. But in the process, which this struggle implies, the dialectics of class relations may turn the present proletarian disadvantage into its opposite. Many intervening factors will still have to be reckoned with their effects, however, primarily depending upon the strategy of the revolutionary vanguard. Yet it may be asked, are there no possibilities of a middle course in between these two extreme variants? The answer is that such possibilities are fading away and that they could at this stage only mean a postponement of the final decision. But likely also is a postponement creating new advantages to the proletariat for a decision in its favor.

The lines are now sharply drawn and extremely tense. Hitler proclaims the extermination of Communism and Marxism, not only in Germany but throughout the whole world. Conscious of their present advantage the Fascists in the government are particularly vociferous in declarations that they will not abdicate until they have reached the goal. In reality this means a recognition on their part that the power is not securely in their hands until the working class movement is completely destroyed. In this manner they serve as the most deadly instrument of the reactionary German junkers and big bourgeoisie.

To fully appreciate the serious menace constituted by the Fascists in this role it is important to understand the extent of their social basis within contemporary Germany. The Fascist movement is a

Alternatives in the Decisive Class Battles

turned the fire of aroused nationalism against the former enemies across the border, particularly against the Versailles treaty and all that it implied. Now that the Fascist brigades believe that the maintenance of power is securely within their grasp the direction of their fire has entirely changed. While continuing their demagoguery as a coat of arms under which a ruthless working class suppression is carried out, the international bankers and the land owners no longer appear in their vocabulary characterizing the enemy. They now feel that they can move their troops directly against the Communist and working class movement. For that the state powers are put at their disposal. This aim has moved up to the very center of their campaign. The Fascist hordes no longer direct their fire against the Versailles treaty. The annual payments of tribute have practically ended and further readjustments promise no great difficulties. Military equality for Germany can easily be obtained. And more so by virtue of the direction of the Fascist fire which is now turning eastward toward the Soviet Republic. The first indications are the reports of straining relations between the two governments.

The German Fascists and the German big bourgeoisie know very well that within the working class of the Soviet Union lie the greatest sources of sympathy and support to the German working class movement. Its existence is no doubt clear to them even if they do not discount the present strangehold of Stalinism paralyzing actual support. They recognize the world implications of the advance of the Communist movement and hence they hurl their challenge to the Comintern and to the proletarian dictatorship. In their threats to exterminate the Communist movement throughout the world they are already consciously and deliberately forcing the spearhead of imperialist intervention against the Soviet Union. This is the double-edged sword by which they aim to accomplish their immediate goal in Germany and simultaneously rally the support of allies of the imperialist powers everywhere for the international objective.

Trouching Reconciliations

The German southern states, recalcitrant to the early Hitler pronouncements, have now declared that their unity in the aims against world Communism. French imperialists, who once greatly feared the Hitler ascension to power, are now completely reconciled to that fact and not at all disturbed. Voices in France indicating rapprochement to Germany are becoming more audible. While the international objective is still concealed in these voices it undoubtedly is taking form in the minds.

Thus we see today in actual development the enormous danger against which the International Left Opposition a long time ago raised its voice of serious warning. The events, however, will continue and develop their own inevitable logic. German capitalism today still constitutes the weakest link of the imperialist chain. Its tremendous convulsions lend emphasis to the unevenness of development existing also in the capitalist decay stage. But to the revolutionary proletariat this poses definite strategic problems which the Stalinist regime has completely failed to master. On the one hand it poses the possibility of breaking the weak links in the imperialist chain and the possibility of the proletarian seizing power. In this sense the uneven development of decay becomes a lever favoring the proletarian dictatorship in the USSR. But at the same time it also emphasizes the impossibility of building socialism within one single country, in the USSR which is still subject to the conditions of this very unstable equilibrium of the world market dominated by decay capitalism. These two problems of strategy cannot be separated but must go hand in hand so that a policy of building toward Socialism in the USSR first of all presupposes a policy of preparing the parties, of preparing the working class for the extension of the proletarian revolution by the seizure of power in the weak links of the imperialist chain.

Effects of Stalinist Strategy

The entirely false strategy of the Stalinist Comintern regime has run counter to the dialectic of the developing capitalist contradictions. As a result the proletariat has suffered defeats and become disarmed, despite the objectively favorable situations, and the most murderous reaction has at present gained the upper hand. What enormous crimes! But by this the Stalinist regime has only succeeded in postponing the shocks which will now reverberate with so much more titanic force and sweep it from its position of domination in the movement.

Without entering into discussion of the possibilities and implications of further developments in Germany, and without even excluding in advance the worst variant for the next stage, it is nevertheless well to remember that the present attempted counter-revolution will still meet its complications. The economic conjuncture is by no means favorable to its development. The working class is not yet defeated. And it is more important yet to remember that the German working class, though unprepared still possesses great resources within itself. But these can be unfolded fully only when its vanguard has become freed from the curse of Stalinism.

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What "attacks" are meant? Obviously not physical attacks on the social democratic organizations. The only significance that can be attached to the passage is that inside the united front the Communist International pledges itself to refrain from all criticism of the social democracy! The overnight swing from ultra-Leftism to that species of bureaucratic opportunism which characterized the whole course of the Stalin-Bucharin leadership from 1924 to 1928, is positively breath-taking! And therein lies the outstanding danger in the turn of the C. I. It must always be borne in mind that the ultra-Leftism of the Stalinists is itself of a peculiar kind. It is not so much kindred to the extreme radicalism that characterized certain sections of the Comintern in its infancy, as it is the specific trait of an opportunist group in Communism which has been frightened into a leap to verbal radicalism by the catastrophic consequences of its own Right wing policy of the day before. The bureaucracy of the Comintern is not ultra-Leftist "per se," but Centrist, that is, a petty bourgeois tendency swinging between Marxism and liquidationism. The innately opportunist ultra-Leftist, swinging to the Right in a second spasm of fear, is capable of the wildest plunges in that direction, with consequences no less disastrous for the revolutionary and working class movements. The first distinct signs of that swing are already visible. The Stalinist heroics who yesterday refused to sit down with the "murderers of Liebknecht and Luxemburg" now knock fearfully at the doors of the "united front" organized by the blotted Jewish bourgeoisie to protest mildly against Hitler's anti-Semitism. These who were too proud yesterday to take the leadership of a united proletarian front, today complain pathetically at not being allowed to march at the tail-end of a "united front" of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois frock coats of various religious denominations.

Against this dangerous opportunist trend, an alarm signal must be sounded immediately. The united front for which the Left Opposition fights is the united front of Lenin and Trotsky, and not of Stalin and Chiang Kai-Shek, of Tomsky and Parcell, of Pepper and LaFollette, of Kolarov and Raditch. We are accordingly imperative today when according to news reports (New York Times—3-13-33) thousands of workers are returning to industry. This lays the basis for broad strike movements. The workers will struggle for the positions lost in the past period; against worsening of economic conditions, wage cuts, etc. At such a time the revolutionary workers functioning militantly within the reformist unions can further the interests, both economic and political, of the entire class, and a cement a unity of the proletariat that can defeat Fascism and go over the struggle for a Soviet Germany.

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A Trade Union Balance Sheet In Germany

The failure of the German Communist Party to arouse the working class against Fascism is to a large extent explainable by its false trade union policies. When von Papen put through his coup l'Etat, on July 20th of last year, the party's call for a general strike met little response in the ranks of the workers. Similarly, on the occasion of the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of the German Reich on January 30, the call of the Communist party for a general strike found all but the most advanced revolutionary workers, as the Hamburg dock workers, staying on their jobs. A revolutionary party which was able to rally over five millions to its parliamentarian banner, could get tens or at best several hundred thousands to respond to its extra-parliamentary action, the general strike.

To understand this one must examine the party's trade union policies in the past few years and its relation to the general trade union movement.

The Third Period Policy

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Kincaid Miners

(Continued from Page 1)

would plan the enlarged conference on as broad a basis as possible. The discussion centered around the character of the united front primarily. It is of particular importance to the members of the Left Opposition to know the position of the International Labor Defense which was represented by Andy Newhoff. When asked what the position of the I.L.D. was in relation to the united front he said in effect: "The I.L.D. is prepared to participate in any united front effecting the interests of the workers. We are prepared to unite with anybody, no matter who they are, on any minimum basis, except of course, that we shall have the right to our independence. On such a basis, we are prepared to participate in this movement. That has always been our position."

This has not always been the position of the I.L.D. as is known to everyone. Quite the contrary, it is a decided departure from the previously known position of the I.L.D. and as such marks a positive step forward. How far the I.L.D. will go in arriving at a correct position on the vital question of the united front remains yet to be seen, and this conference will be a test for the organization. But if it is really prepared to follow a correct position, it will be a decisive force in this movement. If not, if it will continue its previously disastrous line, it will only continue to lose prestige in the eyes of the working class.

The real work of the conference still lies ahead. There are excellent possibilities for the creation of a mass movement that will struggle in the interests of the indicted miners who run the danger of being railroaded to jail or to the electric chair by the allied class of Chicago, as everywhere, must be made acquainted with the Taylorville case. They must be mobilized into action to prevent a deliberate attempt to cut into a movement of militant workers in struggle for their bread and butter. Silence will only help to defeat the miners.

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Danger in C.I.

(Continued from Page 1)

who disrupt the united front of the workers." (Our emphasis.)

The Pravda comment on this passage repeats that "during the time of these revolutionary actions, that solely during that time, the Communists will refrain from 'attacks' against the social democratic organizations."

What "attacks" are meant? Obviously not physical attacks on the social democratic organizations. The only significance that can be attached to the passage is that inside the united front the Communist International pledges itself to refrain from all criticism of the social democracy! The overnight swing from ultra-Leftism to that species of bureaucratic opportunism which characterized the whole course of the Stalin-Bucharin leadership from 1924 to 1928, is positively breath-taking! And therein lies the outstanding danger in the turn of the C. I. It must always be borne in mind that the ultra-Leftism of the Stalinists is itself of a peculiar kind. It is not so much kindred to the extreme radicalism that characterized certain sections of the Comintern in its infancy, as it is the specific trait of an opportunist group in Communism which has been frightened into a leap to verbal radicalism by the catastrophic consequences of its own Right wing policy of the day before. The bureaucracy of the Comintern is not ultra-Leftist "per se," but Centrist, that is, a petty bourgeois tendency swinging between Marxism and liquidationism. The innately opportunist ultra-Leftist, swinging to the Right in a second spasm of fear, is capable of the wildest plunges in that direction, with consequences no less disastrous for the revolutionary and working class movements. The first distinct signs of that swing are already visible. The Stalinist heroics who yesterday refused to sit down with the "murderers of Liebknecht and Luxemburg" now knock fearfully at the doors of the "united front" organized by the blotted Jewish bourgeoisie to protest mildly against Hitler's anti-Semitism. These who were too proud yesterday to take the leadership of a united proletarian front, today complain pathetically at not being allowed to march at the tail-end of a "united front" of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois frock coats of various religious denominations.

Against this dangerous opportunist trend, an alarm