

And Now Again — the "Russian Question"

The article below is part of the post-conference discussion on the general line and inner-party course of the C.P.S.U. being conducted by the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Opposition). All comrades and readers of the "Age" are invited to participate. Articles are limited to 1,000 words.—Editor.

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The building of socialism is difficult even under the most favorable conditions, conditions much more favorable than those inherited by the Russian proletariat. In the case of the Soviet Union, the economic backwardness of old Russia, the chaos brought on by Czarist and Menshevik counter-revolution, the terrible cost of foreign invasion, proved factors multiplying and accentuating the general difficulties attendant to the construction of socialism. In the face of all these unfavorable factors, the C.P.S.U. has led the Soviet masses to veritable miracles in economic and social achievement—to industrial and agricultural progress the rate and volume of which are unequalled and even undreamt of in the history of mankind, to a world-astounding revolution in social relations and institutions.

Of course, these achievements, gotten despite a hostile capitalist world, gotten under conditions of an international credit blockade, were won at a price, a terrific price in severe temporary hardships, in great strain and stress. And, indeed, not without serious mistakes, some unavoidable and altogether too many which should and could have been avoided, had there prevailed in the party a healthier regime, a less factional, a less bureaucratic, a broader and more collective and truly self-critical leadership. Yet, with all shortcomings, the price was a bargain price, historically speaking.

However, the difficulties and setbacks that we desire to turn the searchlight on just now are not the general and inevitable ones but rather the particular acute ones coming to the notice of the world in the recent months. At the outset, let us frankly admit that the program set at the beginning of the year for three of the basic commodities (coal, iron and steel) will not be achieved in time, despite tremendously impressive advances. The food problem is acute. Grain collections have fallen short. There is a severe dearth of consumer goods. The transportation system and distributive apparatus are conspicuously faulty. The labor turnover has assumed demoralizing proportions.

All tourists have noticed these developments. Some people in the Soviet Union have written "bleeding" letters about this to their relatives in the United States, especially among the Jews. Foreign correspondents have told the world about it. The U.S.S.R. hasn't hidden these facts. And the leadership of the C.P.S.U., the Central Committee, has openly proclaimed these facts and has proposed relief measures.

Why The Recent Difficulties

Even in their most aggravated form, the latest difficulties and hardships in the U.S.S.R. are, in general, to be associated with the travail and pains of socialist construction, of socialist growth and success. Obviously, the source of difficulties and hardships in the U.S.S.R. is in striking contrast to the source of suffering and misery in the capitalist world, suffering and misery associated solely with the decay and breakdown of the capitalist social-economic order. In a decaying, collapsing social system, hunger, once it sets in, tends to assume permanency and increasing intensity and extension. In a progressive, growing society, such as the Soviet Union today, momentary food shortage may be the very price paid for providing the ways and means of completely banning hunger sooner rather than later.

But what are the specific reasons, the concrete causes for the recent worsening of the economic

situation in the U.S.S.R. In the main, these are:

1. The very rapid growth or heavy industrialization has reached a stage in which the cumulative effect of years of an insufficient supply of trained, skilled labor and technical resources is now painfully evident and felt.

2. Due to natural and uncontrollable causes there were harvest failures last year in the Ukraine and in the North Caucasus.

3. The heavy fall in the prices of raw materials on the world market (wheat, oil, etc.) has been particularly hard on the Soviet Union. This marked price collapse not only means that more must be exported by the U.S.S.R. in order to secure sufficient foreign exchange with which to buy certain necessary machinery from other countries, but it also tends to make still more stringent the credit facilities for the U.S.S.R. in the world credit mart.

4. The very conditions under which the U.S.S.R. is building socialism, conditions under which the nation must rely strictly on its own resources, strictly on its own capacity to produce an adequate capital supply and reserves, have themselves generated serious complications in the Soviet monetary system and exchange relations. The problems of inflation in the U. S. S. R. have recently become more acute. Tho one cannot at all speak of the dangers of inflation in Soviet economy in the same

by Jay Lovestone

light and sense as in capitalist economy, yet one should not close his eyes to the grave difficulties which inflationary consequences also breed for us even in the U. S. S. R.

5. Even the very best of leadership and the most correct of general lines are no absolute guarantee against mistakes being made in the every-day execution of policies. We often must experiment until we find solutions. This process of experimenting and learning also has its price in temporary hardships and strain.

6. Of course, the altogether too frequent application of factional strategy in the execution of economic policy by the Stalin regime in the C.P.S.U. has played its part in multiplying difficulties and aggravating the consequences of mistakes.

7. Finally—and the influence of this factor cannot be exaggerated—the sharpening war danger in the Far East in the last year has forced certain rearrangements in Soviet economy, which only further aggravate the strain and stress to which the Soviet people are still subject. Herein are to be found some of the reasons for the "overcollections" of grain last year and the resultant discouraged peasants, small wheat collections and great mortality of traction animals this year.

Even the world-renowned and efficient American railway system virtually broke down in the first months of military mobilization for the World War. And, the storing up of extraordinary food reserves for the army and general population certainly does not increase the food supply available for immediate consumption by the country as a whole.

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Success or Failure? Right or Wrong?

What yardsticks shall we apply to estimate the success or failure of socialist construction in the U. S. S. R. today? What test shall we apply to determine whether the general line of the C.P.S.U. in the U.S.S.R. is right or wrong?

First of all, we should not judge either the achievements today or the acute difficulties of the moment in the light of the factional strategy and boasts of the Stalin regime. Secondly, we should not apply merely arithmetical gauges, even tho there are incontrovertible statistics to prove the success of the Five-Year Plan and the correctness of the general line of the C.P.S.U. for the Soviet Union, even beyond the most sanguine expectations of its most ardent proponents.

Rather, we should apply more fundamental standards, more basic criteria, tests which go more to the root of things and which show the definite direction and course of development—economically and

socially. On this basis, one can even call upon so hostile a judge of the U.S.S.R. as the leading organ of finance capital in Canada, whose government, the Bennett government, is today the most militant enemy of the U.S.S.R. Thus, the instigator of "The Financial Post" of Montreal, Mr. Thornton Purkis, draws the following balance sheet:

"Firstly, that they have established in Russia a native machine construction industry, and have thereby provided for the unhampered progress of industrialization.

"Secondly, that they have managed to recruit millions of young workers to the service of industry, thus supplying the machinery with the due complement of man-power.

"Thirdly, that they have carried thru a collectivization of Russian agriculture, and have so laid the foundations for the socialization of the country.

"... True, the importation of machines and tools is actually increasing in absolute figures; but the proportion of imported machines to those of native production is steadily diminishing. Leaving the future to look after itself, it is justifiable to assume that the progress already achieved in machine making in Russia is nothing less than astonishing....

"If there are any healthier, happier people working on farms in Canada than those that I saw working on collective farms in Russia I should like to meet with them....

"The average peasant works with a hope and a cheerfulness that was not present before. He 'belongs', as we should say. He is no longer in bondage to the kulak."

The tremendous rise of the social services, the unbelievable progress in overcoming illiteracy, the improvement of the social composition of the country, the practical wiping out of unemployment, the whole cultural revolution, the vast improvement in the international and military position of the U. S. S. R., the strengthening of the Soviet Union as the base of the (Concluded on Page 7)

For Militancy And Unity In The Trade Unions

THE NEEDLE TRADES SITUATION IN LOS ANGELES

by Paul Berg (Los Angeles)

About six months ago there took place an open conference between the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Local 65, and the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. This conference took place upon the latter's initiative with the aim, of course, of exposing the "company union" character of the I. L. G. W. U. At the conference the N. T. W. I. U. delegates proposed that both unions elect an equal number of representatives, a similar number to be elected at a mass meeting, and that all these constitute an organization committee that should, independent of both unions, begin a drive to improve the working conditions of the cloak and dressmakers in Los Angeles. This program did not even look like a united front "from below." It appeared to some three hundred workers present at the conference like a third union, and they had enough of two. Against this, the I. L. G. W. U. delegates hammered one union and offered an open door.

The result of this conference was that the Industrial Union people exposed themselves as a group of people engaged in petty maneuvering. From this point dates the revival of sentiment among the ladies garment workers for an International Union.

The State Of The Needle Unions

At the time of the conference, the Industrial Union had about 50 members; the other union still less out of some 6,000 workers in the industry. The bulk of these workers, composed chiefly of Mexican and American women, have never been in unions. Only about 500 Jewish cloakmakers ever had a union until 1930 when, as a result of an unsuccessful strike led by the International, the union was smashed.

The workers conditions have been steadily becoming worse, until today most dress finishers work for \$1.00 a day and operators and pressers for about \$2.00 a day. The cloakmakers made up by working as high as 75 hours a week; this kept a section of them altogether

out of jobs, even during the rush season. The first to react to this condition were the cutters whose wages too have been cut in more than half. A group of them turned to the International local with the demand that this local help them get a charter for a separate local union.

The cutters, all English speaking men (the "aristocrats" of the trade), everywhere in the country refuse to meet together with the other crafts, the "riff-raff". For some reason the executive committee refused to grant them this demand at first and much time for organization was lost. It took much arguing to convince the executive that this would stimulate the cutters to organize. Today, nearly 100 cutters, for the first time in Los Angeles, have joined the union. This makes about half of this craft organized.

Following the cutters there came a group of pressers demanding from the union that the dues of 40c a week be reduced to 25c as a condition to organize. This too was granted. To date about 150 pressers enrolled, mainly Italian and Mexican men; no women pressers, who make up about half of this craft, have been reached as yet.

The cloakmakers, too, have be-

LENIN SAYS:

The revolution has accomplished so much, that in a few months Russia, in its political system, overtook the advanced countries. But this is not enough. War is inexorable; it raises the question with merciless sharpness: either perish or overtake the advanced countries and surpass them economically as well. To perish or to rush ahead at full speed. This is how history has presented the question.

gun to return to the union. A number of strikes in cloak shops have taken place lasting a few days and ending in small gains for the workers. One such strike met with greater resistance from the boss and the shop has been on strike for nearly six weeks. The Red Squad got busy and one day arrested five members of Y.P.S.L. who came to assist in picketing. It should have been the business of the union to answer the Red Squad strike-breaking with greater picket lines, to draw in outside help and raise the issue of the right to strike and picket. However the conservative leadership failed to do this excusing itself that the union was too weak organizationally and financially.

The nearly 400 members that have joined the union to date are a very negligible part of the total number employed in the industry. Yet they are very important as they give a clear expression of the discontent of all the workers. Nearly half of the union members are for the first time in the union and they came to the realization of the need to organize without any effort on the part of the union. Some of the more conservative leaders of the union were even reluctant at first to meet and help this new sentiment for organization. So that all the new members were not organized by the union; they came to the union of themselves.

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The Task For The Future

The new members, nearly all working in dress factories, have thus changed the union from a cloakmakers local to that of a dressmakers local. This new development requires that the leaders of the union turn their attention toward the dressmakers not, of course, neglecting the cloakmakers. The dressmakers, altho new in the organization, have shown great loyalty to the union. Whatever activity there was during this season was all to wrest from the manufacturers some gains for the cloakmakers and some

raises in wages amounting to as high as 25% were obtained; yet most of the cloakmakers are still outside of the union.

I do not believe that it will be possible for very long to keep the dressmakers in the union with speeches only. I maintain that organization goes hand in hand with a struggle for better working conditions. The union should have tried to win some improvements for the new members immediately after they joined the organization, when there was still work in the industry. If this is not corrected by the next season, the idea of union will soon appear to them like pie in the sky.

The union alone, as it is today, will not be able to organize the dressmakers, 90% of whom have never had union experience. Added to this are the special difficulties to organize in Los Angeles. To organize the dressmakers it will be necessary to draw in all the labor and all pro-labor organizations into active support. A broad organization committee must be set up representing all those who are opposed to such vicious exploitation and police rule. Its main work should be publicity, agitation, legal help and relief work. The issues around which to rally public sympathy are many: women are extremely exploited, long hours in violation of the state law of 8 hours for women, unemployment as a result of long hours, the refusal of the right to organize, etc. All these are issues which if well dramatized, will make it much harder for the police to prevent organization. It would also help to raise funds necessary for an organization drive. Los Angeles is known for its big liberal crowd which has always supported strikes. No help is to be expected from the International in New York. All the appeals the union has made for help have not been answered. The union must rely upon local support and, when properly approached, all the necessary help would be forthcoming to the cloak and dressmakers.

Again - the Russian Question

(Continued from page 5)

international proletarian revolution are also results the social and political importance of which defy exaggeration.

It is clear. With all mistakes and shortcomings, with all stress and strain, with all hardships and difficulties, aggravated in recent months by special factors, the correctness of the general line of the C.P.S.U. for the rapid construction of socialism in the Soviet Union is unchallengeable. To the question: "It is worth while?" we answer: "Yes! A thousand times yes!" To the question: "Success or failure?" we answer, unhesitatingly and with just as much understanding and conviction as inspiration and enthusiasm: "The

Five-Year Plan has succeeded beyond the shadow of all doubt and far beyond the dreams of its first dreamers and the thoughts of its first thinkers."

ABOUT THE "YOUNG COMMUNIST"

"YOUNG COMMUNIST", Issued monthly by the Communist Youth Opposition of the United States, vol. 1, No. 1, November, 1932, New York City.

With its recent revival of activity, the Communist Youth Opposition decided to resume publication of an official youth paper to replace the long-suspended "Revolutionary Youth." The first issue of this new paper is emphatic proof