

opponents assert, that the War Minister had in view in writing "1917." His treatment in the book of the Zinoviev-Kamenev "mistake" just before the Bolshevik coup d'etat of 1917 and the "lessons" Trotsky draws from this "mistake," his critics charge, are not history, but propaganda. The War Minister, they declared, was aiming to bring about a party split either because of mistaken ideology or from motives of sheer egotism and revenge. The version in the introduction to "1917" of the now famous Zinoviev-Kamenev mistake is as follows:

On Oct. 10 (Oct. 23, New Style), 1917—that is, two weeks before the Bolshevik revolution took place—the Central Committee of the Communist Party held its regular session at Petrograd. Present at the session were Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Uritsky, Dzerzhinsky, Kollontai, Bubnov, Sokolnikov and Lomov. The matter under discussion was the setting in motion of an immediate armed uprising against the Kerensky Government. There was considerable debate about details, and especially about the military divisions and garrisons likely to answer the call of the Bolshevik leaders. Lenin finally took the floor and framed the resolution for this armed uprising. A vote was taken. The resolution was carried by 10 votes to 2. The two who voted against the immediate armed uprising were Zinoviev and Kamenev. This, however, was not yet the whole "mistake" of the two. That was to come the following day. The next day, Oct. 11, not content with voting against Lenin's proposed armed uprising, Zinoviev and Kamenev stated their objections to such a course in a letter which they sent out to the principal Bolshevik organizations in Petrograd, hoping to counteract the decision for an immediate armed uprising as adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party. Trotsky spreads this Zinoviev-Kamenev letter over a number of pages, quoting single phrases or sentences from it and interspersing these quotations with his own interpretations and comments. The more salient parts of the letter inveighing against the proposed armed uprising, as given in "1917," are the following:

We are deeply convinced that to declare a state of open war against the Government at this time is to throw into the balance not only the fate of our party but also the fate of the Russian and International revolution.

Through the army, through the workers' organizations, we are holding a revolver against the temple of the bourgeoisie.

The chances of our party at the elections to the Constitutional Assembly are excellent. . . . The influence of Bolshevism is growing. . . . With the employment of correct tactics we shall be able to receive one-third and possibly more seats in the Constitutional Assembly.

The Soviets, having penetrated into life, will not permit themselves to be destroyed. . . . Only upon the Soviets will the Constitutional Assembly be able to base its revolutionary work. . . . A Constitutional Assembly and the Soviets—such is the combined form of government of institutions to which we are advancing.

Only the majority of the workers of Russia and a considerable part of the soldiers are for us. The rest (of the population of the country) is in question. For instance, we are all convinced that if the elections to the Constitutional Assembly take place the majority of the peasants will vote for the Socialist-Revolutionists.

The great mass of soldiers supports us, not upon the slogan of war, but upon the slogan of peace. . . . If we, having taken over the reins of government, are compelled by sheer force of world events to enter upon a revolutionary war, the mass of soldiers will abandon us. There will remain with us, of course, the best parts of the younger army elements, but the mass of soldiers will go from us. . . .

Every one who is not merely intent on talking about an armed uprising must weigh carefully the risk of such a step. And exactly here we consider it our duty to state that at the present moment nothing could be more harmful than to understate the strength of our adversary and to overstate our own strength. Petrograd will decide, and in Petrograd our adversaries are numerous: 5,000 junkers, excellently armed, well organized, knowing how to fight and anxious to fight in view of the situation in which their class is placed; then there are the General Staff, the Cossacks; there is an important part of the garrison, an equally important part of the artillery which encircles Petrograd, and then our opponents, with the aid of the Central Executive Committee, will almost surely try to bring the army from the front.

Other equally powerful passages in the famous Zinoviev-Kamenev letter, breathing most irreconcilable opposition to Lenin's insistence of "Now or

never" and to his insistence for an immediate armed insurrection against the Kerensky Government, are cited by Trotsky:

It would be a deep, historic untruth to put the question of the assumption of the power by the proletariat in a manner of "Now or never." No! The party of the proletariat will grow; its program will become more and more clear to the masses. . . . There is only one way in which the party can defeat its own progress, and that is if the party, in the present circumstances, takes the initiative in entering upon an offensive campaign. . . . Against this ruinous policy we lift our voice in warning.

The most decisive question is this: Are the workers and the soldiers of the capital (Petrograd) in a frame of mind to see their only salvation in street uprisings? Are they eager for such street encounters? No, they are not in any such frame of mind. . . . The existence among the poverty-stricken masses in the capital of such a frame of mind, one eager for such street encounters, would have been a guarantee that the initiative once taken by these masses would also draw to itself the larger and more important organization of workmen, such as the railroad workers and post and telegraph employees, upon whom the influence of our party is very light. But, since such a frame of mind is not to be found among factory workers and in the barracks, it would indeed be nothing but self-deception to make such calculations.

In entering upon his long dissertation on the Zinoviev-Kamenev "mistake" of opposing an armed uprising two weeks before this uprising successfully overthrew the Kerensky regime and won the revolution for Bolshevism, Trotsky disclaims all desire to utilize their attitude in the past as a weapon against these leaders. Yet this is precisely what he does, both directly and by implication. He states and restates the fact that at the critical moment in the history of the proletarian revolution in Russia, their judgment failed them, not their sincerity, not their devotion, but their ability to gauge a political trend. At the supreme moment of the revolution, Trotsky declares, Zinoviev and Kamenev underestimated the strength of the revolution to such an extent that they denied the existence of a revolutionary sentiment among the masses, and at the same time they over-estimated the strength of opposition out of all proportion. Here are Trotsky's own words:

Imagine what would have happened if the opponents of an armed insurrection had had the upper hand in the party in the Central Executive Committee. The revolution would at the very outset have been condemned to failure. Lenin might have appealed from the decision of the Executive Committee to the rank and file of the party, as he was at one time ready to do. And no doubt he would have been successful in his appeal. But not every party would under similar circumstances give the same sort of an answer to its Lenin. . . . It is not difficult to imagine how history would have been written if in the Central Committee the side which was disinclined to fight had won. Official historians would of course present matters in such a light as would make it clear that an armed uprising in October, 1917, would have been sheer madness. They would have given the reader erudite statistical charts enumerating all sorts of junkers, Cossacks, army corps coming from the front. Not having been tested in the fire of attack, the supposed strength of the enemy would have appeared much greater than it was in reality. Such is the lesson which every revolutionist must engrave on his conscience.

From this point on, Trotsky, his opponents assert, departs completely from the high road of history, which he has been following more or less irregularly, and enters irrevocably on the by-path of polemics. By skillful grouping and regrouping of revolutionary events in Russia and in Europe, it is pointed out, Trotsky builds up an atmosphere of suspicion and questioning toward Zinoviev in particular. Trotsky indicates that the "mistake" made in 1917 of underestimating the latent revolutionary forces in the country and of opposing Lenin's demand for an immediate military uprising has again and again been repeated by Zinoviev, who is the head of the Third, or Communist, International as well as one of triumvirate that directs the Communist party in Russia. As the head of the Third International it is Zinoviev's business to gauge revolutionary signs in countries other than Russia. Trotsky holds Zinoviev responsible for the failure of the Communist uprising in Germany and Bulgaria in 1923 because he underestimated the revolutionary trend in Russia in 1917.

(To be continued in next issue.)

## Correspondence

### SUGGESTIONS

Editor, Western Clarion:

I am notifying you of change of address as above and enclosing one dollar for Maintenance Fund. The discussion in the Clarion is interesting and I am in accord with "C". As a labor college you are a success and have turned out some of the best men in the English speaking countries. I think I understand the Marxian position and have studied the problem from both viewpoints, but I can't sit on the fence and watch the ship sink while I still have to live on it and say, "O Hell, I should worry, it don't belong to me." We have been watching and waiting for the collapse of Capitalism since ever I knew anything of the movement, but the fact is that Capitalist ideology is more strongly entrenched in the minds of the workers than since I ever knew the movement, so why segregate ourselves in a 2x4 room and talk Party dogma and allow all the fakery to control the developing working class labor parties and trade unions. Socialism to me is inevitable as the positive outcome of Capitalism, but unless we who understand Capitalism take part in the developing labor parties what can we expect them to be but bourgeois parties? Why sit on the fence and let them make all kinds of mistakes? Because once the workers have been fooled, betrayed and led into strikes in which they were beaten before they started they become so that they look on all as fakery.

I have been a reader of the Clarion for about 12 years and when in the West a Party member and like many more of the proletariat, I can not express myself in the language that some of the Party members do but I have taken part in the every day struggle and know what is in the slave's mind. Today we have a period of reaction. Tomorrow we may see the movement taking revolutionary action but it must have understanding so I agree with the article in the last issue signed H. J. B. H. Turn the Party into a Labor College and develop men and women fitted to take the leadership in the movement as it is and give it the understanding and we will get Socialism. These are the opinion of an honest plug.

Yours fraternally,

A. R. Pearson.

N. Y., Feby., 11 1925.

### THE VALUE CONCEPT.

San Quentin, Calif.

Feb. 24 1925.

Editor, Western-Clarion:—

I've been interested in McNey's recent articles because they approach the recondite mysteries of Marx in a language closer to that of common sense and experience than I can recall having found elsewhere. So here are a few questions and contentions that I would like him to deal with in as much the same manner—or more so—as possible.

First, is Value a property of a commodity? If so, is it a physical property? And if it is a property, but not physical, must it not therefore be a "meta-physical property"—and as such be ruled out of scientific consideration? It appears to me that Marx's concept of value is purely metaphysical. He seeks a "common property" of all commodities and concludes it can only be "that of being products of labor"; and further, since "coats and linen" result from different kinds of labor, the "common property" must be an abstract sort of labor that is never performed in reality, i.e., "Socially necessary labor." (Elsewhere it seems Marx considers this socially necessary labor as merely labor of the average efficiency. Vol. I, p. 379). As further evidence of the metaphysical nature of this concept of value, it requires a "phenomenal form" and finds it in something else, in "exchange value." So what is value but the "ding an sich" of commodity per se?

The statement is sometimes made: "Price is a quantity of money; value a quantity of labor." If so, then value is real enough. It can be measured in dynes and poundals if you want; in duration as Marx does; or in duration with a co-efficient for bodily wear and tear, as the worker does in comparing jobs. However the thing measured would have to be a real thing, and not an abstract kind of labor that is performed in the fifth or sixth dimension.

Now for exchange-value, "the phenomenal form of value." If it is truly phenomenal it must be apparent to our senses, a part of reality. It is the actual ratio at which commodities exchange at a given time and place? Or is it a different ratio—the ratio of the amounts of actual labor, or labor actually needed, of different kinds, requisite for the production of the two commodities exchanging? Or yet again a different ratio—the ratio of the amounts of this abstract, non-existent "Socially necessary labor"? If it is the first case, it is a mere statement of an observation, and an explanation of nothing. If it is the 2nd or 3rd, by the value theories they respectively imply, the ratios would invariably be 1 to 1, and therefore neither explain anything nor supply the data upon which an explanation might be built (as in the 1st case). And in the 3rd (which seems to me to be Marx's case) we are dealing with abstractions and not with phenomena, anyway. And by what quirk in the notion of causation are we to credit