

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF NEO-COMMUNISM

(Continued from page 7)

country—so Lenin declared (in his report on "National and Colonial Problems" before the Second Congress of the Communist International) that

we must give up the scientific prejudice that each country must inevitably pass through capitalist exploitation. In a time of mighty proletarian uprisings of a world-wide scope the Soviet regime can be established in those countries where capitalism has not yet developed.

Further than Lenin goes Bukharin, who says:

From an examination of the process of a world revolution, we may draw the following general conclusions: The process of the world revolution begins in those countries where the state of development is lower and where the proletarian victory is easier to get. . . . The less capitalistically developed a country is, which means the lower its revolutionary development, the more quickly may the revolution be accomplished. (Hillquit, p. 97.)

Neither Lenin nor Bukharin are willing to admit that they have deviated in any point from Marxism, yet it is easy to see that their conception of the social revolution is precisely the reverse of the Marxian.

The specific Russian condition not only enabled but compelled a minority to make a revolution by means of an armed uprising; but the Bolshevik leaders did not see in this episode anything due to specific Russian conditions, and they quickly decided, and it has become an article of communist faith that "it is a minority which carries out the revolution;" continuing, and "it might be fairly said that every revolution is undertaken by the minority, the majority only joining in during the course of the revolution and deciding its victorious issue." The writer of this calls himself a Marxist; in fact, he claims that he is the real upholder of Marxism, but what he says is against the letter as well as the spirit of Marxism. It is not Marxism, but Bakouninism.

As to the question of the necessity of an armed uprising, there is no communist from Lenin down to his American followers that has not insisted upon it. Kamenev expressed the views of his comrades very correctly in the following words:

The center of contemporary life is the ultimate division of the whole capitalist society into two camps . . . not only in Russia, but in all other countries . . . this is not enough, we know that these two camps come in conflict with arms in their hands . . . civil war is the sign of our time . . . who ever wants to . . . explain to the worker . . . his real duties . . . must start out with the recognition that from now on the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are in open armed civil war. (Third International, p. 7.)

As you see, with Kamenev it is no more a question of what should be; he knows that the civil war is on, and that settles it. This was not only Kamenev's view—the first congress of the Communist International has in its initial declaration this sentence:

The class struggle all over the world, in Europe and America, has become an open civil war.

And the second congress declared:

The period in which we are living is the period of the direct civil war . . . everywhere . . . where there is a labor movement of any significance, the workers are on the eve of bitter battles with arms in their hands. (P. 64.)

Their belief that the world revolution had already come was really phenomenal. Zinoviev predicted at the first congress of the Comintern that "it would perhaps take one year, and we would already begin to forget that there was a fight in Europe for Soviet power, because during this year the fight would be finished." This belief, of course, was not founded on sober examination of European conditions. It was a rationalization of a wish. The leaders of Soviet Russia, who were (and are) also the leaders of the Communist International, did not forget that Marx had once said that the revolution could begin in Russia, but could only succeed if followed by a world revolution. As early as April 14, 1918, Trotsky said in a speech:

We maintained in the first days of the revolution that the Russian revolution would succeed and free the Russian people only on the condition that it serves as a signal for the beginning of the revolution in all other countries; but if capitalism continues to rule in Germany, and in New York the stock exchange will have the upper hand, and British imperialism will retain its power, then we are lost.

A world revolution was a life necessity for them, and they succeeded in convincing themselves that it was ready to come.

But if the world revolution is ready to come, it is simply foolish for any one to fight for reforms, for momentary relief, and whoever does it is a traitor to the working class. If the class struggle in Europe and America has become an open civil war, what are needed are general headquarters and an army and rifles. The communist movement was organized, therefore, as one world-wide party, with no national autonomy, but with an iron military discipline, as befitted an army, and the "international" in Moscow became the general headquarters of this army.

It is sometimes said that as long as we shall have armies, we shall have wars. This may also be applied to the communists. They were originally organized as the revolutionary army, an army in the usual sense of the word, an army that was to begin and finish the social revolution in a short time—within a year, Zinoviev believed. Within an army in time of war there can, of course, be no freedom of discussion; soldiers must obey orders and not argue. That is why the Communist International inserted in its famous 21 points the clause that, if any one does not agree with everything, he shall be expelled; that is also why a point was inserted stating that the communist parties must have legal and illegal organizations; that is why democracy was banished from the party. Practical democracy, which both Marx and Engels considered an absolutely necessary condition for the social revolution, was discarded by the Bolsheviks, who could not get a majority in the Russian constituent convention; in fact, democracy was declared an anathema, a bourgeois prejudice for which the workers should have no use. This attitude had gone so far that a leader of the American communist party told me personally that if danger should arise and the democratic institutions of the United States be abolished, he would not raise a single finger to defend them. This also explains how it became possible for the German communists to entertain the thought that they might, in alliance with German fascists, work for the overthrow of the German republic. This is the old anarchistic impossibilist principle of "all or nothing," a principle which Marx and Engels abhorred.

(To be concluded)

BRITISH ELECTIONS.

A Few Facts and Figures.

The numerical strength of parties in the British House of Commons on dissolution was: Conservatives 258, Labour 193, Liberals 158, Others 5. At the 1923 elections 538 Conservatives, 427 Labour and 457 Liberals contested 615 seats. Of these, 50 candidates were returned unopposed.

This year's nominations showed 533 Conservatives, 507 Labour candidates and 340 Liberals. The number of Conservative candidates has therefore remained about the same, whereas the Labour Party had up 80 candidates more than last year and the Liberal figure is about 100 down. The number of unopposed candidates this year is 32, of which 9 are Labour as against 3 in 1923.

In the last elections there were 265 three-cornered contests. In these 213 minority members were returned having obtained the relative but not the absolute majority of the votes. This time the number of three-cornered contests has dropped to 230, as a result of agreements between both capitalist parties in a number of constituencies against Labour. Such coalition arrangements are specially directed

against certain well-known members of the Labour Party.

Since the aggregate vote this year is 13% higher than last year, the Labour Party has increased its votes by about 27%. This tends to prove that the sweeping gain in Conservative votes was won exclusively from the Liberals.

It is quite different with the question of seats. The table given below will best show how little the distribution of seats corresponds with the actual strength of parties under the British electoral system.

	Labour Party		Conservatives		Liberals	
	% votes	% seats	% votes	% seats	% votes	% seats
1922	30.4	23	39	56	29.9	19
1923	30.5	31	38.5	38	29.8	25
1924	34	27	46	66	18	6

Roughly speaking the Conservatives gained a seat this time on an average of 20,000 votes, compared to a seat gained for Labour on about 35,000 and for the Liberals on 75,000.

Here follows a table showing the number of seats won and votes recorded for labor party candidates in each election from 1900 to 1924 inclusive.

Year.	Seats.	Votes.
1900	2	62,689
1906	29	323,195
1910 (January)	40	505,690
1910 (December)	42	370,802
1918	57	2,244,945
1922	142	4,236,733
1923	191	4,355,000
1924	151	5,525,072

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