

10/26/37

THE LOVESTONE GROUP AND THE MOSCOW PURGES

51

The Moscow "purges" which have emphasized the counter-revolutionary character of the Stalin bureaucracy have also served as a test of the views and predictions of all parties and groups of the working class. That this is generally understood may be seen even in the remarks of Will Herberg in the Workers' Age:

"The attitude on the so-called 'Russian question' that we had developed in the course of previous years proved quite adequate in this emergency; no 'changes' or 'redefinitions' were at all necessary." (April 24, 1937).

WERE THE ACCUSED GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY?

February 20, 1937

The trials showed "--that even after such material (as discrepancies and contradictions in the testimony, Ed.) is discarded there still remains substantial bedrock of fact: that efforts at assassination and sabotage were indeed made by some of the followers of Trotsky and Zinoviev." (Editorial)

June 18, 1937

"...we will find that it was entirely natural and understandable --especially under the circumstances of the stifling inner party regime headed by Stalin--that the logic of the positions of Trotsky or Zinoviev, Radek and Kamenov should lead them to an out-and-out anti-Stalin course. However, it is obviously absurd to ask us to believe that suddenly, mysteriously, Yagoda, Tukhachevsky, Gamernick and Rudzatuak became degenerate, became mortal foes of the Soviet Union, became agents of German and Japanese imperialism."

Lovestone--W. A. July 3, 1937.
Article dated June 18.

June 25, 1937

"1. On the occasion of the Radek-Piatakov trial we expressed grave doubts as to the truth of the monstrous accusations raised against the defendants and the 'confessions' and self-denunciation made by them."

Resolution of International Communist Opposition--Workers' Age, August 14th 1937.

Note well: (after) The above was written one week Lovestone's article of June 18th, and one week before that article appeared in the Workers' Age! In

other words, even after Brandler (or Thailheimer) and written that they had always had "grave doubts" about the Radek-Piatakov confessions the Workers' Age wrote that the defendants (guilt) was "entirely natural... and understandable!"

"TROTSKYIST PRINCIPLES" LEAD TO "INDIVIDUAL TERRORISM"?

February 20, 1937

"The fundamental Trotskyist viewpoint, once openly held by Radek, Piatakov and others and presumably retained by them even after their 'capitulation', embodies three main principles: (1) that the chief danger to the Russian revolution comes from within; (2) that the ruling group headed by Stalin represents a conservative, Thermidorian force opening the way for counter-revolution and capitalist restoration; (3) that the Stalin regime can neither be reformed nor removed in a 'peaceful' or 'constitutional' manner, but by force and violence. On the basis of such an attitude and presupposing its consistent translation into action, none of the charges raised against the defendants last August or this January falls outside the limits of political possibility.

June 25, 1937

What is said on the "three main principles"?

"1". "Such methods (of Stalin) deal communism the most disastrous blows it has received at any time from any source."

"2". "Recent events confirm that Stalin and his clique are more or less out to protect their personal authority at all costs, by tooth and nail, and that for this purpose they will stop at nothing, not even at dealing destruction to the soviet state and to communism, not even to compromising both of them gravely. The Stalin regime has turned viciously against the soviet power itself, against the dictatorship of the proletariat, against communism. With his own hands, Stalin

February 20, 1937
(Continued)

Between advocating the armed overthrow of the Stalin government and civil war in the Soviet Union, as Trotsky has publicly done more than once in the last four years, and carrying out acts of terrorism and sabotage, there is no real difference of principle; the difference is entirely one of tactics."

June 25, 1937 (Continued)

himself is wrecking what he himself helped build; the party, the soviet administration, the G.P.U., the army, soviet diplomacy, soviet science, etc."

"3". "There can be no hope for any kind of democratic rights either inside or outside the party when more than physical terror is let loose against all persons who, in the eyes of the 'Central Committee with Stalin at its head' seems suspicious, dangerous or not loyal to the leaders."

"...to remove Stalin and his leadership... is the most burning issue with which the soviet state and communism are today confronted."

"In the Soviet Union, which is a state where the working class rules and socialism is in the making, this historically necessary process can take place thru the channel of evolution. No repetition of revolution is required.... Therefore the role played by them the once revolutionary and progressive, has now become counter-revolutionary and reactionary."

We see that the first two "main principles" of Trotskyism now appear to be official tenets of Lovestone's program (at least on paper!). On the third principle, viz., the need for a political revolution, that is a forcible overthrow of the Stalin regime which has destroyed all possibility of (peaceful, 'constitutional' reform, the Lovestonites evade the question: how can the process take place through the "channel of evolution"? To say "...at bottom, the C.P.S.U. itself is perfectly sound" (as the ICO resolution does) is deceptive prattle!

(Is there any need to comment on the "Marxism" which holds that between armed insurrection and individual terror "the difference is entirely one of tactic"? For example, is it true that the Brandler group in Germany, which is for the armed overthrow of Fascism, is not opposed "in principle" to individual terror against Hitler!)

An unusual feature of the ICO resolution is that not a single word is devoted specifically to the politics of Trotskyism!

WHY THE PURGE IN THE SOVIET UNION?

According to the old line (Editorial, Feb. 20, 1937) the trials had to be judged by the "...all-absorbing question: Is it Stalin or the Trotskyist revolution in Russia, that is the bearer of the fundamentally sound policies of socialist construction? And on this question our position has been made clear more than once. The course of events itself, moreover, has pretty generally confirmed the viewpoint of Stalin as against Trotsky...."

With this argument the Lovestonites justified the Stalinist trials! Analogies were made with the French revolution but the Lovestonites mistook the Thermidorian counter-revolutionary (Stalinist) terrorism for Jacobin-revolutionary terrorism! What a miserable distortion of the Russian events!

If Stalin's social and economic policies were correct why the suppression of workers' democracy, why his terrorist campaign against Bolsheviks? If you ask Lovestone why Browder suppresses democratic rights in the American C.P. he will answer: Browder is afraid that his wrong policies will be rejected by the members. Does not the same reasoning apply to Stalin? On the contrary the ICO resolution gives as the main cause of the purge: "The contradiction between the forward development of the masses (who have "progressed culturally and politically") and the retrogression of vast sections of the party and the soviet machine is being sharpened daily."

The fact is that there has been a cultural and political reaction in the Soviet Union in the past years which is reflected precisely in the present Soviet purges. Is it surprising that the Lovestone press keeps silent about this reaction: the increasing gap between the Stakhanovist "labor aristocracy" and the mass of workers, the material poverty due to bureaucratic planning, the reactionary laws adopted in recent years, on the family, women and such as one which makes a child of wealth subject to execution for theft?

The fundamentally wrong line of Lovestone led him to hail the Soviet Constitution which is now called "a gruesome mockery" (ICO resolution) as a "living proof that the proletarian dictatorship makes for the full development of the right of the toiling masses). And that "as a result of the new constitution, the soviet state is nearing its goal of abolishing the state altogether." (November 14, 1936)

WHAT IS TO BE DONE

The half turn of the Lovestone group is an attempt to get out from under an indefensible position. It is--made primarily under the G. P. U. blows against the POUM in Spain! but still based on the fundamentally false position of the group towards the basic problems of the Soviet Union and its relation to world socialism.

For the leaders of the group it serves as a face-saving device! And for the members? It can be a beginning of a genuine reevaluation of their attitude towards "Trotskyism", that is, towards consistent Marxism. If they undertake such a reevaluation they will end up side by side with the inheritors and defenders of the October Revolution and world socialism, the Fourth Internationalists!

Socialist Party (Left Wing)
116 University Place, N. Y.

READ THE SOCIALIST APPEAL!

READ THE SOCIALIST APPEAL!