

Stalinism in the Canadian Communist Party

By Maurice Spector

Canada affords yet another illustration of the fact that under the best of all possible Comintern regimes, nothing is changed—there is only one unprincipled faction fight the more. The Canadian Party, within the living memory of mankind, has always been what Zinoviev in his palmy days would have called a "monolithic" party. Having barely survived the "Bolshevizing" measures of the Fifth Congress of the C. I. (1924), the sections of the Comintern are now revelling in the "consolidating" effects of the Sixth Congress, on the heels of which, faction fights and expulsion epidemics have broken out in the Soviet Union, Germany, Czechoslovakia, the United States; and even Canada at the periphery has not escaped punishment. The Canadian Party whose portion in the Comintern hitherto has been the fate of "those wretched souls" Dante sings about, who "lived without praise or blame"—has achieved the dignity of those other elect whose conventions are mysteriously postponed in deference to cablegrams from "Moscow". Meanwhile the air is thick with theses, counter-theses and mutual accusations of opportunism and "dishonest political intrigue". Isn't this the "Third Period"?

It is only a few months since the Canadian "Trotskyites" scandalously put forward the demand for a sincere discussion of the fundamental problems raised by the Russian Opposition and the crisis in the International. The best attended membership meetings in party history attested to the interest of the rank and file in the issues at stake. But in their fear, the party officialdom countered with bureaucratic repression to stifle this interest, while their machine worked overtime to lull the membership with a "broad ideological campaign" of bulls and encyclicals, threats and rich slander. A Party of Action, the mem-

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factured leadership—"beneath this corduroy shirt there beats an honest proletarian heart, sir!"—in prospect, it is obviously necessary to give the Lovestones, Peppers and Gitlows the works. And to satisfy the ruling faction for the slaughter of their erstwhile leaders, they were thrown the bones of Bittelman. A heavy sacrifice, it is true, but apparently an unavoidable one. Our throat thickens when we think of how Foster, who was only yesterday an humble worker in the vineyard of comrade Bittelman, must today take the scepter of power without the presence of his faithful Borodin, almost never-failing Colonel House, and think tearfully how he, Foster, who was only yesterday denounced publicly by Bittelman as one who "liquidates everything connected with Communism" today sits with the mighty while his best friend and severest critic must eke out a miserable existence in Russian exile.

As for Alexander himself, he has damned little consolation, but he has some. As he travels the cold wastelands of the Buriat-Mongolian Soviet Republic or shifts to fabled Samarkand to lecture the Uzbecks on the Apex of American imperialism, he can reflect that all is not yet lost, that there may yet be a Fourth Period, and that Time is a great healer. Let him bear in mind the solacing words which the Spanish philosopher, Unamuno, reports were inscribed on a tombstone of the Mallona cemetery in his native town of Bilbao:

"Aunque estamos en polvo convertidos,
"En Ti, Señor, nuestra esperanza fia,
"Que tornaremos a vivir vestidos
"Con la carne y la piel que nos cubria."

Which can be literally translated by Bittelman and repeated to Stalin as follows:

"Though we are become dust,
"In thee, O Lord, our hope confides,
"That we shall live again clad
"In the flesh and skin that once covered us."

In the meantime let him wait, with the patience of all faithful believers in the inevitable coming of the Resurrection. Personally, we feel sorry for the exiled Aleck and we fully intend to drop a salty tear into the next bowl of Russian Borscht our straitened circumstances allow us to order.

bership was informed, could not indulge in the "luxury of discussion" or of groupings. "Trotskyism" was variously defined as a Right Wing deviation, a Left Wing deviation, a petty-bourgeois deviation, an anti-middle peasant deviation and finally a counter-revolutionary anti-Soviet plot.

With the expulsion of the comrades of the Opposition it might be expected that all original sin had been uprooted, and henceforth and forever only bliss and the oldest Old-Bolshevism would prevail. But alas, the expulsions were the prelude to the outbreak of the present prize-fight in the ranks of the stalinized officialdom, who have also initiated a fake discussion to divert the membership from contamination by dangerous thoughts.

Already before the Sixth Congress discontent was beginning to manifest itself among the younger elements, with the organization conservatism and political inertia of the party secretary, J. Macdonald. In the December Plenum of the American Central Committee, Lovestone attempted to saddle responsibility for the leadership of the Canadian Party on the present writer ("the leader of the Canadian Communist Party, unfortunately, used to be an ex-comrade by the name of Spector"—The Communist Jan.-Feb. 1929). Not mere modesty but the interests of historic truth, however, and the fact of the actual balance of forces in the Canadian C.E.C., compel me to disclaim this honor. J. P. Cannon was as little the leader of the United States Party under the regime of Jay Lovestone. Macdonald's base was a tacit but none the less effective majority bloc of the Finnish and Ukrainian sections, who regarded everything with an eye on their property interests, plus opportunist elements like Buck, F. Custance, Shoesmith, Moriarty, the peerless M. Buhay, the 'umble proletarian Roberts, etc. Macdonald himself is the limited type of trade union-I.L.P.er with the most er equipment of Marxism imaginable in a party leader. He has consistently been a barnacle on the ship in every situation the party could have utilized to its advantage by bold initiative. In the current discussion, he is correctly enough accused of being a "Right Danger", of failing to read the economic position, of covering-up the tail-end role of the party in the Oshawa Strike and many other things.

But who are his accusers of the "Left"? Our enthusiasm suffers a slump when we recognize the bland countenance of our old-time acquaintance Tim Buck of the Foster caucus. He has become the big chief of the discontented younger group that had begun to crystallize before the last Congress, and which lacked the courage in the test to face the fact that the Macdonalds, the Peppers, the Lovestones, Thaelmanns, Fosters are all either part and parcel or aspirants of the Stalin regime. All they envisage is the perspective of a long-drawn out see-saw struggle between the ins and outs, garnished with cablegrams and "supplementary decisions", plenipotentiaries and Open Letters. Under the incompetent direction of Buck, his opportunist personal united fronts, the T U E L has become an empty shell and the trade union work of the party came to a stand-still. A supporter of Macdonald writes "the director of the Industrial Department, Comrade Buck enumerates in the Trade Union Thesis about twenty-five failures, most of them having to do with his own department (F. Peel, "The Worker April 13th") The Buck faction's "ideological leader" is a half-baked Bachelor of Arts recently graduated from the Stalin Academy misnamed the "Lenin School", who less than two years ago was still of the OBU and SP of C persuasion and had to be bribed with a secretarial post to enter the Young Communist League.

Incidentally, the revolutionary records of some of the other "old bolsheviks" who denounce L. D. Trotsky as a "menshevik" make edifying reading. One Halpern who vociferously edits a party organ was a Zionist three

years ago, the older Smith who heads the Labor Defense is a Methodist parson in holy orders. Alderman Kolysnik of Winnipeg, the party's only "parliamentary representative" is a successful businessman. Wallace, the "collyumist" of the Worker, who describes the writer as an "intellectual" and a "deserter" is a university graduate, a practicing Churchman, who impartially disposes publicity to the capitalistic parties at election time for a consideration. Limitations of space prevent us from enlarging this list of stone-throwing denizens of glass houses.

The condition of the Canadian Party is at low ebb and unprincipled faction fighting will not improve matters. It will only confuse the real issues and further poison an already empoisoned atmosphere. The present leadership has proven incapable of organizing any resistance to the expulsions from trade unions and trade councils, has failed to counter the disintegration of the Canadian Labor Party with other forms of the political united front. The TUEL exists on paper only. The organization of the unorganized has proceeded by fits and starts. The Dress-makers Union is a shadow. The automobile organization campaign in which the Buck faction were "active" in the shape of an irresponsible adventurer who became Secretary of the Union, is estimated by the Macdonald faction to amount to a "row of beans". The officialdom has proved impotent to organize any resistance to the police suppression of free speech and the Free-Speech Conference, in which the Macdonald faction were active, is described by the other as a fiasco. The Labor Defence has failed to organize any nation-wide mass drive for the release of A. Vaara, the Finnish party editor in jail for "sedition". The membership of the party is declining, the English-speaking section is down practically to zero. The bulk of the membership is Finnish and it is held in the Communist party by compulsion. The Finnish Organization of Canada is a social and cultural society but every member is also compelled automatically to take out a card in the Party or be blacklisted or expelled. It is a unique basis for a communist party. The Ukrainian membership claims to influence the Ukrainian Labor Temple Association, but in the course of the "Free-Speech" fight in Toronto the Temple refused to place its hall at the disposal of a demonstration on the plea that it would endanger their financial investment.

There is no need to minimize the objective difficulties in the path of building up the communist movement, the defeats in the big miners struggles, the "prosperity" and the democratic illusions connected with it, etc. The Communist Opposition does not pretend that Central Committees can shake mass parties out of their sleeves in six months. But there are also considerable opportunities for the development of the Communist party under current conditions which embrace rationalization, bitter exploitation and low wages for masses of the unskilled, organization of the unorganized, and so on. But the pre-requisite for a conscious militant party is a correct regime. The Communist International is a product of the Russian revolution. The regime in the Comintern and its sections is determined by the regime in the Russian Party. Under the Stalin regime in the Comintern, the rank and file of the parties are not being educated but drilled into mechanical obedience in a barracks. The leaders of the national sections are trained to bureaucratic submissiveness and not to critical and independent revolutionary thought and judgement. They rule the membership by demagoguery and Lenin held that demagogues were the worst enemies of the working class. The function of the Opposition will be to rouse to revolutionary consciousness that section of the membership which is not actuated simply by primitive Russian patriotism or sterilized against revolutionary thought by their property interests.

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