

Tracing the Roots and Traditions of - By Leon Trotsky

for the Fourth International

is only a political tendencing class but not identical working class there exist million peasants, various of oppression, misery and by the Bolsheviks reflects of Bolshevism but also the the social composition of of a barbaric past and no m. To represent the pro- vriet state as the evolution ore social reality in the ats, isolated by pure logic. entary mistake by its real trace of it.

ver identified itself either with the Soviet state that considered itself as one of conscious" factor—a very one. We never sinned in w the decisive factor—on tive forces—in the class al but on an international

concessions to the peasant p, set up strict rules for red the party of alien ele- s, introduced the N.E.P., ons, or concluded diploma- t governments, they were om the basic fact that had am from the beginning: owever important it may nsforms the party into a al process. Having taken le, certainly, to influence in a power inaccessible to mits itself to a ten times er elements of society. It stile forces, be thrown out ing tempo of development hile maintaining itself in ectic of the historical pro- those sectarian logicians the Stalinist bureaucracy inst Bolshevism.

say: the revolutionary no guarantee against its such a criterion Bolsh- it has no talisman. But cientific thinking demands why did the party degener- ks themselves have up to 1 analysis. To do this they shevism. On the contrary, ey needed for the clarifica- this conclusion: certainly evism, not logically, how- a revolutionary affirma- tion. It is by no means

ANALYSIS OF BOLSHEVISM

id not have to wait for the reasons for the disintegra- of the U.S.S.R. Long ago e theoretical possibility of member the prognosis of e eve of the October Revo- specific alignment of forces onal field can enable the

proletariat to seize power first in a backward country such as Russia. But the same alignment of forces proves beforehand that *without a more or less rapid victory of the proletariat in the advanced countries* the workers' government in Russia will not survive. Left to itself the Soviet regime must either fall or degenerate. More exactly: it will first degenerate and then fall. I myself have written about this more than once, beginning in 1905. In my "History of the Russian Revolution" (cf. "Appendix" to the last volume: "Socialism in One Country") are collected all the statements on this question made by the Bolshevik leaders from 1917 until 1923. They all lead to one conclusion: without a revolution in the West, Bolshevism will be liquidated either by internal counter-revolution or by external intervention, or by a combination of both. Lenin stressed again and again that the bureaucratization of the Soviet regime was not a technical or organizational question, but the potential beginning of the degeneration of the workers' state.

At the Eleventh Party Congress in March, 1923, Lenin spoke of the support offered to Soviet Russia at the time of the N. E. P. by certain bourgeois politicians, particularly the liberal professor Ustrialov. "I am for the support of the Soviet power in Russia," said Ustrialov, although he was a Kadet, a bourgeois, a supporter of intervention—"because on its present course it is sliding back into an ordinary bourgeois power." Lenin prefers the cynical voice of the enemy to "sugary communistic babble." Soberly and harshly he warns the party of the danger: "What Ustrialov says is possible, one must say it openly. History knows transformations of all kinds; it is absolutely trivial in politics to put one's faith in conviction, devotion, and other excellent moral qualities. A small number of people have excellent moral qualities. The historical outcome is decided by gigantic masses who, if they are not pleased with this small number of people, will treat them none too politely." In a word, the party is not the only factor of development and on a larger historical scale is not the decisive one.

"One nation conquers another," continued Lenin at the same congress, the last in which he participated... "This is quite simple and understandable to everyone. But what of the culture of these nations? That is not so simple. If the conquering nation has a higher culture than the defeated, it imposes its culture on the latter, but if the contrary is true then the defeated nation imposes its culture on the conqueror. Did not something like this occur in the capital of the R.S.F.S.R. and was it not in this way that 4,700 communists (almost a whole division and all of them the best) were submitted to an alien culture?" This was said in the beginning of 1923, and not for the first time. History is not made by a few people, even "the best"; and not only that: these "best" can degenerate in the spirit of an alien, that is a bourgeois culture. Not only can the Soviet state abandon the way of socialism, but the Bolshevik party can, under unfavorable historic conditions, lose its Bolshevism.

From the clear understanding of this danger issued the Left Opposition, definitely formed in 1923. Recording day by day the symptoms of degeneration, it tried to oppose to the growing Thermidor the conscious will of the proletarian vanguard. However, this subjective factor proved to be insufficient. The "gigantic masses" which, according to Lenin, decide the outcome of the struggle, became tired of internal privations and of waiting too long for the world revolution. The mood of the masses declined. The bureaucracy won the upper hand. It cowed the revolutionary vanguard, trampled upon Marxism, prostituted the Bolshevik party. Stalinism conquered. In the form of the Left Opposition, Bolshevism broke with the Soviet bureaucracy and its Comintern. This was the actual course of development.

To be sure, in a formal sense Stalinism did issue from Bolshevism. Even today the Moscow bureaucracy continues to call itself the Bolshevik party. It is simply using the old label of Bolshevism the better to fool the masses. So much the more pitiful are those theoreticians who take the shell for the kernel and the appearance for the reality. In the identification of Bolshevism and Stalinism they render the best possible service to the Thermidorians and precisely thereby play a clearly reactionary role.

In view of the elimination of all other parties from the political field the antagonistic interests and tendencies of the various strata of the population must, to a greater or less degree, find their expression in the governing party. To the extent that the political center of gravity has shifted from the proletarian vanguard to the bureaucracy, the party has changed in its social structure as well as in its ideology. Owing to the impetuous course of development, it has suffered in the last fifteen years a far more radical degeneration than did the social democracy in half a century. The present purge draws between Bolshevism and Stalinism not simply a bloody line but a whole river of blood. The annihilation of all the old generation of Bolsheviks, an important part of the middle generation which participated in the civil war, and that part of the youth which took seriously the Bolshevik traditions, shows not only a political but a thoroughly physical incompatibility between Bolshevism and Stalinism. How can this be ignored?

STALINISM AND "STATE SOCIALISM"

The anarchists, for their part, try to see in Stalinism the organic product not only of Bolshevism and Marxism but of "State socialism" in general. They are willing to replace Bakunin's patriarchal "federation of free communes" by the more modern federation of free Soviets. But, as formerly, they are against centralized state power. In fact: one branch of "state" Marxism, social democracy, after coming to power became an open agent of capitalism. The other gave birth to a new privileged caste. It is obvious that the source of the evil lies in the state. From a wide historical viewpoint, there is a grain of truth in this reasoning. The state as an apparatus of constraint is undoubtedly a source of political and moral infection. This also applies, as experience has shown, to the workers' state. Consequently it can be said that Stalinism is a product of a condition of society in which society was still unable to tear itself out of the strait-jacket of the state. But this situation, containing nothing for the evaluation of Bolshevism or Marxism, characterizes only the general cultural level of mankind, and above all—the relation of forces between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Having agreed with the anarchists that the state, even the workers' state, is the offspring of class barbarism and that real human history will begin with the abolition of the state, we have still before us in full force the question: what ways and methods will lead, *ultimately*, to the abolition of the state? Recent experience proves that they are certainly not the methods of anarchism.

The leaders of the C. N. T., the only important anarchist organization in the world, became, in the critical hour, bourgeois ministers. They explained their open betrayal of the theory of anarchism by the pressure of "exceptional circumstances." But did not the leaders of German social democracy invoke, in their time, the same excuse? Naturally, civil war is not a peaceful and ordinary but an "exceptional circumstance." Every serious revolutionary organization, however, prepares precisely for "exceptional circumstances." The experience of Spain has shown once again that the state can be "denied" in booklets published in "normal circumstances" by permission of the bourgeois state, but that the conditions of revolution leave no room for "denial" of the state; they demand, on the contrary, the conquest of the state. We have not the slightest intention of blaming the anarchists for not having liquidated the state by a mere stroke of the pen. A revolutionary party, even after having seized power (of which the anarchist leaders were incapable in spite of the heroism of the anarchist workers) is still by no means the sovereign ruler of society. But we do severely blame the anarchist theory, which seemed to be wholly suitable for times of peace, but which had to be dropped rapidly as soon as the "exceptional circumstances" of the... revolution had begun. In the old days there were certain generals—and probably are now—who considered that the most harmful thing for an army was war. In the same class are those revolutionaries who claim that their doctrine is destroyed by revolution. (Concluded in next issue).

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