Stalinism and Bolshevism - An Article Concert

(Concluded from the last issue)

Marxists are wholly in agreement with the anarchists in regard to the final goal: the liquidation of the state. Marxists are "state-ist" only to the extent that one cannot achieve the liquidation of the state simply by ignoring it. The experience of Stalinism does not refute the teaching of Marxism but confirms it by inversion. The revolutionary doctrine which teaches the proletariat to orientate itself correctly in situations and to profit actively by them, contains of course no automatic guarantee of victory. But victory is possible only through the application of this doctrine. Moreover, the victory must not be thought of as a single event. It must be considered in the perspective of an historic epoch. The first workers' state-on a lower economic basis and surrounded by imperialism—was transformed into the gendarmerie of Stalinism. But genuine Bolshevism launched a life and death struggle against that gendarmerie. To maintain itself. Stalinism is now forced to conduct a direct civil war against Bolshevism, under the name of "Trotskyism", not only in the U. S. S. R. but also in Spain. The old Bolshevik party is dead but Bolshevism is raising its head everywhere.

To deduce Stalinism from Bolshevism or from Marxism is the same as to deduce, in a larger sense, counterrevolution from revolution. Liberal-conservative and later reformist thinking has always been characterized by this cliche. Due to the class structure of society, revolutions have always produced counter-revolutions. Does this not indicate, asks the logician, that there is some inner flaw in the revolutionary method? However, neither the liberals nor the reformists have succeeded, as yet, in inventing a more "economical" method. But if it is not easy to rationalize the living historic process, it is not at all difficult to give a rational interpretation of the alternation of its waves, and thus by pure logic to deduce Stalinism from "state socialism", fascism from Marxism, reaction from revolution, in a word, the antithesis from the thesis. In this domain as in many others anarchist thought is the prisoner of liberal rationalism. Real revolutionary thinking is not possible without dialectics.

THE POLITICAL "SINS" OF BOLSHEVISM AS THE SOURCE OF STALINISM

The arguments of the rationalists assume at times, at least in their outer form, a more concrete character. They do not deduce Stalinism from Bolshevism as a whole but from its political sins.* The Bolshevik—according to Gorter, Pannekoek, certain German "spartakists" and others—replaced the dictatorship of the proletariat with the dictatorship of the party; Stalin replaced the dictatorship of the party with the dictatorship of the bureaucracy. The Bolsheviks destroyed all parties but their own; Stalin strangled the Bolshevik party in the interest of a Bonapartist clique. The Bolsheviks made compromises with the bourgeoisie; Stalin became its ally and support. The Bolsheviks preached the necessity of participation in the old trade unions and in the bourggeois parliament; Stalin made friends with the trade union bureaucracy and bourgeois democracy. One can make such comparisons at will. For all their apparent effectiveness they are entirely empty.

The proletariat can take power only through its vanguard. In itself the necessity for state power arises from an insufficient cultural level of the masses and their heterogeneity. In the revolutionary vanguard, organized in a party, is crystallized the aspiration of the masses to obtain their freedom. Without the confidence of the class in the vanguard, without support of the vanguard by the class, there can be no talk of the conquest of power. In this sense the proletarian revolution and dictatorship are the work of the whole class, but only under the leadership of the vanguard. The Soviets

One of the outstanding representatives of this type of thinking is the French author of the book on Stalin, B. Souvarine. The factual and documentary side of Souvarine's work is the product of long and conscientious research. However, the historical philosophy of the author is striking in its vulgarity. To explain all subsequent historical mishaps he seeks the inner flaws of Bolshevism. The influence of the real conditions of the historical process on Bolshevism are non-existent for him. Even Taine with his theory of "milieu" is closer to Marx than Souvarine.

are only the organized form of the tie between the vanguard and the class. A revolutionary content can be given to this form only by the party. This is proved by the positive experience of the October Revolution and by the negative experience of other countries (Germany, Austria, finally Spain). No one has either shown in practice or tried to explain articulately on paper how the proletariat can seize power without the political leadership of a party that knows what it wants. The fact that this party subordinates the Soviets politically to its leaders, has, in itself, abolished the Soviet system no more than the domination of the conservative majority has abolished the British parliamentary system.

As far as the prohibition of the other Soviet parties is concerned, it did not flow from any "theory" of Bolshevism but was a measure of defence of the dictatorship in a backward and devastated country, surrounded by enemies on all sides. For the Bolsheviks it was clear from the beginning that this measure, later completed by the prohibition of factions inside the governing party itself, signalized a tremendous danger. However, the root of the danger lay not in the doctrine or in the tactics but in the material weakness of the dictatorship, in the difficulties of its internal and international situation. If the revolution had triumphed, even if only in Germany, the need of prohibiting the other Soviet parties would immediately have fallen away. It is absolutely indisputable that the domination of a single party served as the juridical point of departure for the Stalinist totalitarian system. But the reason for this development lies neither in Bolshevism nor in the prohibition of other parties as a temporary war measure, but in the number of defeats of the proletariat in Europe and Asia.

The same applies to the struggle with anarchism. In the heroic epoch of the revolution the Bolsheviks went hand in hand with the genuinely revolutionary anarchists. Many of them were drawn into the ranks of the party. The author of these lines discussed with Lenin more than once the possibility of allotting to the anarchists certain territories where, with the consent of the local population, they would carry out their stateless experiment. But civil war, blockade, and hunger left no room for such plans. The Kronstadt insurrection? But the revolutionary government naturally could not "present" to the insurrectionary sailors the fortress which protected the capital only because the reactionary peasant-soldier rebellion was joined by a few doubtful anarchists. A concrete historical analysis of the events leaves not the slightest room for the legends, built up on ignorance and sentimentality, concerning Kronstadt, Makhno and other episodes of the revolution.

There remains only the fact that the Bolsheviks from the beginning applied not only conviction but also compulsion, often to a most brutal degree. It is also indisputable that later the bureaucracy which grew out of the revolution monopolized the system of compulsion for its own use. Every stage of development, even such catastrophic stages as revolution and counter-revolution, flows from the preceding stage, is rooted in it and takes on some of its features. Liberals, including the Webbs, have always maintained that the Bolshevik dictatorship was only a new version of Czarism. They close their eyes to such "details" as the abolition of the monarchy and the nobility, the handing over of the land to the peasants, the expropriation of capital, the introduction of planned economy, atheist education, etc. In the same way liberalanarchist thought closes its eyes to the fact that the Bolshevist revolution, with all its repressions, meant an upheaval of social relations in the interest of the masses, whereas the Stalinist thermidorian upheaval accompanies the transformation of Soviet society in the interest of a privileged minority. It is clear that in the identification of Stalinism with Bolshevism there is not a trace of socialist criteria.

QUESTIONS OF THEORY

One of the most outstanding features of Bolshevism has been its severe, exacting, even quarrelsome attitude toward questions of doctrine. The twenty-seven volumes of Lenin's works will remain forever an example of the highest theoretical conscientiousness. Without this fundamental quality Bolshevism would never have fulfilled

its historic role. In this

The Opposition declared its program: "Since Lenia theories has been created, tify the backsliding of the international proletarian ago an American writer, ticipated in the Spanish B ists in fact are today the and Lenin-Bernstein did Stalin in revising Marx." must add only that Bernst retical needs: he tried con relationship between the democracy and its program however, not only has noth but is in general foreign to soever. Its "ideology" is police subjectivism, its pol crude violence. In keeping caste of usurpers is hostile account of its social role nd else. Stalin revises Marx ar tician's pen but with the her

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Victor Serge describes the regime envisioned by Lenin and present social conditions. Using tive bureaucracy as an axis; aspects of soviet life as the exinequalities of the wage scale trialization and collectivization the truth behind the Stakes growth of a police dominate legislation which has replaced

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