

Lovestoneites Change "Line" Under Impact Of Recent Events In U.S.S.R.

By Joseph Carter

The so-called Russian question has been and remains the touchstone of international Marxist politics. The twentieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution is not only an occasion for the celebration of this great event but simultaneously the moment to evaluate the meaning of the present crisis in the Soviet Union and how it can be resolved in the interests of revolutionary socialism.

This task is undertaken by M. S. Mautner, for the Lovestoneites, in *Workers' Age* (Nov. 20, 1937). In line with the resolution on the Soviet Union of the "International Communist Opposition" (see *W. A.*, August 14, 1937), Mautner justifies his group's defense of Stalinism against Trotskyism in the past on the ground that the Soviet bureaucracy then played a progressive role.

A Belated Echo

"Trotsky himself declares that it would be criminal to deny the progressive work accomplished by the soviet bureaucracy," the author tells us. And adds: "But it is equally true that this progressive mission has been completely exhausted. In the past, its (Stalinist) positive and constructive aspects predominated: it was the builder of socialism. Today it has entered its negative and destructive phase: it is undermining, degrading, endangering its own achievements."

In so far as the above is correct, it is a belated echo of the Trotskyist analysis. However—and this is the nub of the matter—the Lovestoneites saw (and see) no connection between the yesterday and today save Stalin's organizational methods which are completely divorced by them from his general program, social, economic and foreign policies.

Trotsky's objective analysis of the progressive role of the bureaucracy referred to one side of the function of Stalinism, which it performed despite itself, its own reactionary program and practice: under the pressure of the kulaks, private traders and imperialists on the one hand, and the Trotskyist opposition on the other. (This is clear by an examination of the origin and development of the First Five Year Plan).

For the Lovestoneites, reference to yesterday's progressive role of the bureaucracy serves merely as an apology for its defense of the Stalinist program, internal and foreign policies.

The Sources of Stalinism

Mautner, however, clearly reveals the untenable position of the Lovestoneites. He tells us that the sources of the present crisis in the Soviet Union are not to be found in the "Thermidorian reaction" but rather:

"... in the specific conditions in which the Russian Revolution has developed, in the incredible handicaps it has faced of the backwardness of the country and its own isolation in a world of imperialism."

For the solution of this crisis, he adds: "And it is the International socialist revolution alone that can break the fatal isolation of the Soviet Republic in the world of imperialism."

With this, Mautner not only goes beyond the analysis given in the resolution but "sinks to the depths of Trotskyism!" For he presents the crux of the Trotskyist argument against Stalinism—the impossibility of constructing socialism in one country alone, without the aid of the international socialist revolution; that is, the objective conditions for the

"Thermidorian degeneration."

Or is this an exaggeration? Let us listen to Jay Lovestone in August 1935:

Yesterday's Position

"...The Soviet workers themselves with their own forces, without armed proletarian aid from outside can build a socialist society in Russia." (*Soviet Foreign Policy*, Pg. 28). Even more, he adds: "If the C P S U were not correct in concluding that the Soviet proletariat was capable of overcoming fully all capitalist elements within its country, that is, of building a socialist society, then it would really have no reason for maintaining power. We should then stop fooling the workers in the USSR and everywhere else and give up power to another class." (Pg. 28).

And today, Mautner-Lovestone tell us quite casually that the internal crisis is due to the "fatal isolation" of backward Russia which can be broken only by "international socialist revolution." In other words, the Russian workers by "their own forces, without armed proletarian aid from outside" cannot build socialism!

To follow Lovestone's old logic he should today conclude that therefore "We should stop fooling the workers in the USSR and everywhere else and give up power to another class" (see above)! But his "logic" was as deceptive as his theory (of socialism in one country); today he abandons both without the necessary re-evaluation.

The Stalinist Constitution

The Stalinist Constitution, the trials and purges, the foreign policy (in which are included the policies of the Comintern) are not merely symptoms of the present situation but necessary prerequisites for the bourgeois counter-revolution from within.

The Constitution expresses in legal terms the political expropriation of the proletariat and the omnipotence of the bureaucracy. The trials and purges destroy actual and potential defenders of nationalized property relations. Soviet foreign policy (and Comintern policies) aims to maintain the absolutism of Stalinism against Fascist destruction and prevent at all costs a working class revolutionary victory in Western Europe which would make impossible Stalinist absolutism in Russia and threaten the Stalinist policy of subordination of the working class to its "democratic" imperialist allies.

The new constitution was hailed by the Lovestoneites:

"The new constitution of the Soviet Union is living proof that the proletarian dictatorship makes for the full development of the rights of the toiling masses. As a result of the new constitution the Soviet state is nearing its goal of abolishing the state altogether." we read in the *Workers' Age* of Nov. 14, 1937. Seven months later we are told by these same people that the articles of the constitution "read like a gruesome mockery." (*I.C.O. resolution*, June 25, 1937, *W. A.* August 14, 1937). Mautner does not even mention the constitution.

Moscow Trials

The Zinoviev-Kamenev and the Radek-Piatakov trials were likewise defended by the Lovestoneites. Like pleading attorneys they asked the jury to overlook the "circumstantial evidence" which pointed to frame-ups, the inconsistency between the politics of the defendants and the charge of individual terror, discrepancies in testimony and indisputable falsehoods. The trials should be viewed with "historical objectivity", they insisted; and pretentious analogies were made with the revolutionary terror of the Jacobins. (See *Workers' Age*, Feb. 6 and Feb. 13, 1937).

An editorial of February 20th declared: "When objective judgement is passed on the Moscow trials, it must surely be done primarily on the basis of the all-absorbing question: Is it Stalin or the Trotskyist opposition that by and large represents the basic interests of the socialist 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 that of Trotsky."

But life itself so ruthlessly threw to the winds the despicable apologetics of Lovestone, that following the execution of Tuchahevsky, the arrest of Yagoda, etc. the I.C.O. resolution of June 25, 1937 stated: "Such methods (Stalin's terrorism) deal communism the most disastrous blows it has received at any time from any source." (*W. A.*, August 14, 1937).

Could anything reveal greater bankruptcy! The Lovestoneites now unwittingly admit that they mistook Stalinist counter-revolutionary terrorism for revolutionary terror.

Nor were the Lovestoneites more successful in understanding Russian foreign policy or its relation to the policies of the Comintern. In August 1935, Lovestone wrote:

"The Trotskyist theory that there is a fundamental cleavage between the interests of 'Russian state policy' and the interests of the international proletariat is false from top to bottom." (*Soviet Foreign Policy*, Pg. 27). He polemicized against those who declared that, for example, the social patriotism of the French Communist Party was due to Russian foreign policy.

And today? Lovestone (and Mautner) remain silent. However, August Thalheimer, their international theoretician, presents a hitherto not unknown view:

"What is responsible for the change in the policy of the Communist International?", he writes in the *British New Leader* (August 20, 1937), "The crisis in Russia is the explanation. Because of the absence of proletarian democracy, Soviet Russia is going back and the bureaucracy is defending itself under terror."

"The rulers of Russia are satisfied with Socialism (!) in their own country and status quo in other countries. Their policy is the Isolated Socialist State."

Is it not clear how critics of Stalinism must "borrow" (more accurately, plagiarize!) from the basic views of Trotskyism which they yesterday declared "counter-revolutionary"?

We thus see that the Lovestoneite fundamental theories, analysis, logic and conclusions on this basic

INTERNATIONAL NOTES

The Franco-Soviet Pact and the Maneuvers of the Imperialists. Soviet Union Elections Featured by Continued Purge.

By John G. Wright

Rumors that the Franco-Soviet pact is about to be scrapped have been revived of late. The "democratic" European press keeps stressing the growing isolation of the Soviet Union. British diplomacy has been particularly active in recent days in pointing out that there are no insurmountable barriers to divide the imperialist camp into two irreconcilable wings, i.e., peaceloving "democratic" states, versus the bellicose Fascist states. The official and "unofficial" visits paid to Hitler by British statesmen are indications of a similar trend. A curious incident that occurred toward the end of last month may be directly connected with these maneuvers to "reconcile" the existing antagonisms.

The Paris correspondent of one of Mussolini's newspapers sent in a dispatch on the desirability of establishing a Franco-Italian rapprochement. It was published in *Tribuna*. The issue in which this article appeared was thereupon confiscated, and the correspondent recalled. The official explanation was that this correspondent had merely expressed his "personal" opinion. It is of course no secret that no "personal" opinions are permitted to slip into the rigidly censored Fascist press. In any case, Mussolini is "unofficially" on record as ready for "reconciliation".

Journal des Nations, the "organ" of the League of Nations published in Geneva hardly carries any news about the Soviet Union. An occasional brief notice may appear from time to time dwelling on some latest "achievement". Not a word about the purge, the "trials" etc. On the other hand, it carries perhaps the most detailed accounts outside the Comintern press of the activities of the Stalinists, especially with regard to France and Spain.

Thus, *Journal des Nations* devoted several issues to reports of the recent plenum of the Spanish Communist Party, giving considerable space to the speeches made there, and in particular to the oration made by M. Anton "the political Commissar of the Central Front." M. Anton, we are informed by the *Journal*, devoted his entire speech to "showing the relations between the Trotskyites and the Fascists, between the members of the P.O.U.M. and the partisans of Franco." There follows an extract from his speech: "The struggle against Trotskyism," he declared, "is not a question which solely concerns the Communists, but is the struggle of the Spanish people as a whole. That is why we want to denounce the peril that is constituted by the Trotskyite elements." (*Journal des Nations*, Nov. 19, 1937.)

The French newspapers, however, devote a great deal of attention to the purge. *Matin*, for example, insists that the Red Army is undergoing another "cleansing." *Havas Agency* has been circulating "unverified reports" that many army divisions are now being headed by officers of subordinate rank. *Matin* likewise reports the rumored suicide of Postyshev, and the arrest of Victor Keen, editor-in-chief of *Journal de Moscou* and former Tass correspondent in Rome and Paris.

In the Soviet Union there are 33 republics, of which 22 are autonomous and 11 "independent" Soviet entities. No other sphere appears to have been more thoroughly purged than the administrative machinery of these republics. The hands of the executioner reached even into Biro-Bidjan where the Jewish party heads, Professor Lieberberg, Chafkin and several others were arrested as "saboteurs, bourgeois-nationalists—and Japanese spies." These men had been credited officially as the "builders of Biro-Bidjan".

Latest dispatches leave no room for doubt that the republics are being "re-purged". Thus, in the Ukraine where Lubchenko, the Chairman of the Ukrainian Soviet Government, committed suicide on Aug. 30, and the secretary of the party Popov was arrested as a "Trotskyite", the newly appointed Chairman of the Government, Bondarenko, also "committed suicide." In White Russia, Cherviakov, the President of the Republic, committed suicide, and the Chairman of the Soviets and the secretary of the party were arrested. In Tadzhikistan, Muksumov and Bobokalov, the successors of Rakhimbayev, the Premier, and Shotemir, the President, were arrested on September 21st. The Kirghiz Republic had been purged, but again the Chairman Isakeyev and others who had replaced the "spies and traitors" were themselves purged. On Nov. 20, there was reported another "plot" in Uzbekistan. Seven "plotters" were shot. Among them the head of the C. P., Kaipov.

Writing in the *Manchester Guardian* on this aspect of Stalin's blood purge, Dr. J. N. Steinberg comments as follows: "It is impossible to believe that in all the national states states simultaneously all the most important leaders should be nothing but political and moral criminals. This mass campaign seems to be intended to clear the way for a purely Russian national state." (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, November 5).

To demonstrate to the world how securely he sits in the Kremlin, Stalin promised to free 15,000 political prisoners on the XX anniversary of the October revolution. But, of course, they remained in jail and in the concentration camps.

question have been refuted by history itself, as inadvertently admitted by the Lovestoneites themselves.

What remains? Bewilderment, spiced with critical bits taken from Trotskyism; apologies for their old position, and a utopian conception that although in Russia "There can be no hope for any kind of democratic rights

either inside or outside the party" the removal of Stalin (that is, the overthrow of the bureaucracy) "can take place thru the channel of evolution" (ICO resolution, June 25).

And with this eclectic program the International of Lovestone-Thalheimer-Brockway-Gorkin is to be organized!