

Marxism and Russian Revolution

by Jay Lovestone

"We can measure the imbecile features of the modern bourgeoisie by the altitudes its 'great intellects' can reach."

This is how Marx long ago characterized the bourgeois "brains" in the realm of the science of political economy. This estimate still holds true. However, this does not in the least lessen the dangers to the working class in the analyses and "theories" of capitalist political and economic experts.

A recent series of articles on the Soviet Union and the Communist International by Duranty in the *New York Times*, cleverly written and couched in many superficially pro-Soviet terms, constitutes one of the most dangerous anti-Soviet, anti-Communist attacks yet made in this country. Duranty, it must be remembered, is no ordinary newspaper correspondent. In powers of observation, political education and general understanding of the Soviet system he stands head and shoulders above his colleagues on the American ruling class press. Yet, after years of observation, Duranty shows his total failure to grasp the fundamentals of the class struggle by coming to ridiculous and reactionary conclusions.

Obviously, the bourgeoisie is much disturbed over the Soviet Union's great progress in Socialist construction especially over the fact that it comes at the same time that the whole capitalist world is steeped in so serious a crisis and the breakdown of its economy is growing steadily worse. That's why they are so eager and interested to undermine the growing interest and faith of the toiling masses in the Socialist progress of the Soviet Union. This explains the harmony of the capitalist chorus thruout the world which ridiculously "greeted" Stalin's recent speech, before the Soviet industrial experts, as "a retreat from Communism, a return to Capitalism". Unfortunately, insofar as Duranty in particular is concerned it must be said that a good deal of the fabric of his anti-Soviet phantasies is woven from the practices, the extravagant fictional boasts and the clique talk and maneuvers of the Stalin regime itself. This *New York Times* expert has apparently drawn considerable inspiration from the "leadership cult" so energetically propagated in the last factional struggle in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by the Stalin supporters.

In his last series Duranty thus raised some fundamental questions which demand clarification. Let us examine these problems.

Marxism-Leninism Thru Bourgeois Spectacles

Duranty presents the essence of his estimate of the Soviet Union when he chides so-called "Western Marxists" and his own "bourgeois critics" because "they fail to understand that":

"The dominant principle of the Soviet Union, the called Marxism or Communism, is now a very different thing from the theoretical conception advanced by Karl Marx

"The dominant principle in Russia today is not Marxism or even Leninism, although the latter is its official title, but Stalinism

"Stalinism is a tree that has grown from the alien seed of Marxism planted in Russian soil and whether Western Socialists like it or not it is a Russian tree. Stalinism, too, has done what Lenin only attempted. It has re-established the semi-divine supreme autocracy of the imperial idea and has placed itself on the Kremlin throne as a ruler whose latest word is all in all and whose frown spells death.

"The Five Year Plan is nothing more or less than applied Stalinism." (*New York Times*, June 14, 1931).

In the same violent anti-Soviet strain Duranty, under cover of complimenting Stalin, thus lets his imagination further run riot:

"Where Marxism says: 'Eliminate class distinctions', and Stalinism does so by simple and effective process of destruction, as Tamerlane destroyed his enemies or the Hebrew prophet slew for the glory of Jehovah. It is hard and horrible for twentieth century America to hear this but facts are facts. . . . So Tamerlane made pyramids of hostile skulls, or Samuel 'hewed' Agag in pieces before the Lord." (*New York Times*, June 24, 1931). "Leninism—anyway, at the outset, as the records show—was a sort of debating society where a small group of devoted comrades discussed policies, sometimes wasting time and energy in discussion, with freedom and equality.

"Stalinism is an imperial sceptre, not decked with the golden orb and cross and the Orloff diamond of Czarist rule but a bar of polished steel" (June 27, 1931).

Could any one make a more frantic appeal to the fundamental class interests of the American exploiters? But Duranty goes on to set up a dividing line between Stalin and Lenin and Marx and Stalin on such basic questions as the peasantry, the national question, and even the proletarian dictatorship. He declares:

" . . . The Kulaks who under Leninism were an almost privileged class, encouraged to work and prosper . . . (*New York Times*, June 24, 1931).

"One of the most evident ways in which Soviet Russia is modifying Marxism is in the matter of nationalities and Soviet federation" (June 26, 1931).

"Karl Marx conceived of the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship in a highly industrialized state where the actual majority of the population would be urban workers speaking the same language and having the same needs, habits, and aims" (June 26, 1931).

It is easy to see what poison there is for the workers in this estimate. What subtle blows are here aimed at the underlying Leninist foundation of the U. S. S. R.! What forces of demoralization and hostility such conceptions can let loose among the workers who are for the Soviet Union because they very correctly see in it the embodiment and the beginnings of the realization of Marxism, of Leninism in life, in their own days and time!

It is necessary to begin in A.B.C. fashion

in order to dispell these misconceptions as well as to sound a timely warning to those comrades who for factional reasons have been instituting a "Stalin cult" in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern and who repeatedly speak of the Soviet Union "under the leadership of Marx, Lenin and Stalin" (Browder).

Lenin on Marxism

What is Marxism? What is Leninism? Is there such a thing as Stalinism? Let us turn to the greatest pupil and follower of Marx, Lenin, for a sound estimate of Marxism:

"Marxism imposes upon us the duty of taking the most exact and objectively correct view of the class relations and of the concrete circumstances of every historical moment. The Bolsheviks have always tried to be faithful to this obligation, which is an absolute imperative one from the point of view of those who desire to gain a scientific basis for their policy

"A Marxist must take account of real life, of the exact facts of reality, and not hang on to the tails of the theories of yesterday, which like every theory, at best only outline the fundamental, the general and do not come near enough to the complexities of life

"The Marxist does not leave the firm ground of the analysis of class relations."

With the above as our standard, relying on this yardstick of Marxism, it is patent that the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics today, the policies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to which the U. S. S. R. is adhering, are founded on the bedrock of Marxism, on the scientific, revolutionary teachings of Marx. All talk about Tamerlane, even if under the chocolate coating of "Stalinism", is calculated hokum aiming to discredit and destroy the base of support of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics among the ever increasing masses who believe in it and are inspired by it.

Liberty and the Proletarian Dictatorship

In ideological structure and in political tactics and conclusions Marxism is revolutionary. Bukharin has correctly said: "Marxism is the algebra of the evolution" and "his (Marx's) teaching is that social development inevitably leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat."

And when Kautsky still had a breath of revolutionary spirit in his teachings he emphasized that Marx and Engels "coined the phrase 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which Engels defended shortly before his death in 1891." The last time (about a quarter of a century ago) when Kautsky even tipped his hat to the revolutionary teachings of Marxism he spoke of "the seizure of the powers of the state," by the proletariat (*The Road to Power*).

Marx minced no words when he insisted in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*:

"Between the capitalist and the Communist systems (the present status in the Soviet Union) of society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political transition period, whose state can be nothing else but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

The Social-Democrats, who are always prepared to use brutal violence for the bosses and against the workers, shudder at and denounce terror and ruthlessness of the victorious proletariat against the capitalists and landlords, against the overthrown ruling class. And this opposition is supposed to be in the name of Marxism! Now comes along Duranty and parrots the cultured ignorance of the Marxists of the epigones, of the perverters of Marxism. Of course, Duranty, being a live-wire newspaperman and first class journalist, doesn't merely stop at a negative. He goes further and thus attempts to strike an even more dangerous blow at the Soviet Union. Duranty's thesis is that ruthlessness in crushing the defeated ruling class, that the smashing of class lines, is something foreign to Marxism and Leninism but it a special feature of his pet creation "Stalinism."

What are the facts? First of all, Marx never viewed the dictatorship of the proletariat as a change of cabinet; he saw it as a new and distinct type of governmental machine not growing out of the capitalist state but coming out of the destruction of the bourgeois state. The proletarian dictatorship, according to Marx and Lenin, is based on violence against the capitalists.

Marx and Engels thus put the question clearly:

"The working class cannot, confine itself to taking possession of a ready-made governmental state machine and setting it going for its own." (Preface to the *Civil War in France*.)

"The proletarian revolution has not to transmit the military and bureaucratic machine from one hand to another, as has been done up to the present, but must break it" (Marx:—*Letters to Kugelmann*).

More than that. Marx never viewed this as a single act but as a process over years. He said:

"You will have to go thru fifteen, twenty or fifty years of civil and international war, not only to change social relations, but also to transform yourselves and make yourselves fit for political domination."

Further developing this theory of Marx, Lenin said:

"The proletarian revolution is impossible without the violent destruction of the bourgeois governmental machine and the putting of this new one in its place."

And then Lenin shows:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most heroic and implacable war of the new class against its more powerful enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose power of resistance is increased tenfold by its overthrow The dictatorship of the proletariat is a relentless struggle with bloodshed and without, a struggle both violent and peaceful military and economic, educational and administrative, a new war against the forces and traditions of the old order" (*Left Wing Communism*).

In the face of this, why does Duranty speak sneeringly of Marx as the "theorist," in a disparaging sense and of Lenin as a "debating society" leader—but of Stalin as a man of action against the old order? Only the fools or the factionally-perverted would think this "glorification" by Duranty of Stalin as against Marx and Lenin grows inercely perhaps out of his ignorance of Marx and Lenin and personal admiration of Stalin. No. We believe there is method in Duranty's madness. The method and aim are obvious when we do not forget that when Duranty speaks of Comrade Stalin as the leader of the Bolshevik party of the Soviet Union he compares him to Tamerlane. This is shameful slander of the Soviet Union. Certainly Tamerlane led no movement building a Socialist classless society—a society free from exploitation and oppression—the kind of society now being built in the Soviet Union under the inspiration and leadership of the C. P. S. U. of which Stalin is today the outstanding figure.

One need not argue with Duranty about liberty and freedom in the United States. Very likely he knows at least as much about Colorado, West Virginia, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, and the rest of the stars in the American flag as he knows about the Soviet Union. However, since he talks so much of liberty and cries so much about its absence in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and the ruthless smashing of class lines in the Soviet Union because the latter is supposedly founded on his invention of Stalinism instead of Marxism, we are prompted to remind him of the splendid definition of liberty made by Marx:

"Liberty consists in this, that the state is transformed from an organ superior to society into one subordinate to it; and even today state institutions are more or less free in proportion as they limit the 'freedom of the State'."

From this dialectical, scientific viewpoint, regardless of how the *New York Times* and the Kulaks may deplore, despise and despair, there is more liberty in the Soviet Union today—for the overwhelming majority of the population than there is or ever was or ever can be in all of the capitalist countries of the world put together. Thus, in the United States the state is an organ so "superior to society" as to club and jail workers on strike, to keep them hungry when jobless, to deport them when class-conscious. On the other hand, in the Soviet Union the State is so "subordinate to it" (society) as to provide for complete social insurance for the workers, practically abolish unemployment, and take the peasantry out of the dark misery they were immersed in during the many centuries of Czarism and capitalism. The essence of liberty prevails and grows in Socialist Russia. The essence of liberty doesn't exist and can't develop or grow in capitalist United States with all its much-vaunted talk of being the "land of the free" and Hoover's loud boasts of "rugged individualism."

Read the second article in the series: "Marx-Lenin-Stalin" in the next issue.

AGAINST A NEW REFORMIST PARTY!

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textile field

The advocacy of class-collaboration, cooperation with management, peaceful and brotherly attitude toward the boss, Christian feeling in the class-struggle—these are not to be the characteristics of revolutionaries.

VI.—C.P.A. Leadership Does Not Stand For Revolutionary Overthrow of Capitalism

Very significant and of the utmost importance is the fact that the thesis that the National Committee has drawn up, tho several times it is mentioned that capitalism must be abolished and a workers republic set up, not once is it mentioned that this can be done only thru revolutionary struggle; that is, thru use of armed force by the working class . . . It is peculiar that the thesis spends so much time on a plan for the American economy but is silent on the question of revolutionary overthrow The fact of the matter is that the leadership of the C. P. L. A. has a reformist attitude on this

fundamental question

VII.—The Conciliatory Attitude of the C.P.A. Toward the Socialist Party

It is an accident that the thesis treats the Socialist party so politely? It says: "The Socialist party in the United States today does not have a clear, working-class orientation." The Socialist party, which has an anti-working class orientation, which betrays the workers, has given up the class struggle, stands for reformism and bourgeois democracy is merely said "not to have a clear working class orientation."

The Socialist party is belabored for not having succeeded in "winning the confidence of American workers." As tho that were a tragedy! It would have been a tragedy had the Socialist party won more influence

X.—Another Reformist Sect on the Labor Scene

Precisely at a time when unity and clarity is necessary for the American working class, the C.P.A. embarks up-