

Building Socialism in U.S.S.R.

by Jay Lovestone

The question of the construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union is far more than an ordinary tactical problem confronting the proletarian republic. It is a vital problem facing, in its many ramifications, the entire international working class and the many millions of oppressed colonial masses. It is precisely for this reason that this question has been the core of more than one bitter factional controversy in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the Comintern. And just because it has become so much of a factional butt, have so much confusion and bitterness crept into the consideration of this vital problem.

Of course, the bourgeois critics of the Soviet Union—friendly or hostile—have not been free from this confusion. Thus we find Duranty repeating a thread-bare accusation against the Soviet Union and hiding it behind that great concoction of his, "Stalinism":

"The essential feature of 'Stalinism' which sharply defines its advance and difference from Leninism and is the key to the comprehension of the whole five year plan is that it frankly aims at the successful establishment of Socialism in one country without waiting for world revolution."

"The importance of this dogma, which played a predominant role in the bitter controversy with Leon Trotsky and later with the 'Rights' (Right-wing Russian Communists) cannot be exaggerated. It is the Stalinist 'slogan' par excellence, and it brands as heretics or 'defeatists' all Communists who refuse to accept it in Russia or outside." (New York Times, June 18, 1931).

The Problem Defined

In order to avoid the pitfalls of such sweeping confusion as Duranty shows above, it is necessary to begin with simple questions and some fundamental definitions. The Russian workers have seized political power. They now rule Russia, one-sixth of the earth. What shall they do with their power within the Soviet Union? This is no abstract question. To play with the state power is to play with fire. The question of constructing Socialism in the Soviet Union shall never be treated abstractly. What shall the Soviet proletariat do in the Soviet Union except build Socialism? For what other purpose shall they use their state power in the Soviet Union except for constructing Socialism there? Let the critics of the Soviet Union—bourgeois and otherwise—tell us what should the Soviet workers build in the Soviet Union except Socialism.

What do we mean by the question: Can the proletariat build Socialism in the Soviet Union? The construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union means the overcoming by the Soviet workers with their own forces of all capitalist elements in the Soviet Union. Hence, we ask the question: Is the proletariat of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics capable of overcoming its own bourgeoisie (in the mill, in the store, and on the land)?

Some Communist Party of the Soviet Union History

For years, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has answered this question with an emphatic yes. Duranty should know that there never were any differences between Bukharin and Stalin on the answer to this question. Quite the contrary. It was at the Fifteenth Party Congress, in December 1927, that Bukharin, speaking for the Congress, administered the most crushing ideological defeat to Trotskyism on this viewpoint. If the Communist Party of the Soviet Union were not correct in concluding that the Soviet proletariat was capable of overcoming fully all bourgeois 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 working class in the U. S. S. R. or elsewhere and give up power to another class. Despite tremendous difficulties—technical backwardness, slowing down of proletarian revolution in Western Europe and America, bitter imperialist opposition—the proletariat of the Soviet Union has remained in power and has splendidly utilized its power for achieving remarkable progress in building Socialism.

The very establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in the U.S.S.R. laid the political basis for the process of Socialist construction in the Soviet Union. Can the Soviet proletariat thru its own forces now develop the necessary economic basis as well for Socialist construction? The great economic progress made by the Soviet Union, especially under the Five Year Plan, shows how true it is that the Soviet proletariat can develop the economic foundation of Socialism within its country. At the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Stalin very correctly defined this task of laying the economic foundation of Socialism:

"To lay down the economic basis of Socialism means to combine agriculture with Socialist industry into an economic whole; to subordinate agriculture to the guidance of Socialist industry; to establish relations between town and country on the basis of a direct exchange of the products of agriculture with the products of industry; to close and abolish the channels thru which classes arise and primarily capital, and in the last resort to create such conditions of production and distribution as will lead directly to the abolition of classes."

This policy has been the policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for years. The fate of the Kulaks and the rapid progress of collectivization in the villages only bear out forcibly the correctness of this policy. That's why we can now see very clearly how correct Bukharin was when he pointed out that:

"The question of the possibility of constructing Socialism in our country (the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, not

merely "one country" in the abstract; the Soviet Union and not Luxembourg, for example—J. L.) is nothing more or less than the question of the character of our revolution."

We have seen that the Soviet proletariat has been able to score great successes in laying both the political and economic foundations of Socialism in the Soviet Union. Yet, one would be foolhardy to maintain that this fight within the Soviet Union is so fully victorious that its successes in Socialist construction are free from the dangers of attack, intervention and destruction by world imperialism. Hence, the question of the final, complete and unbreakable victory of Socialism. To repeat, constructing Socialism in the Soviet Union involves the ability of the Soviet proletariat to defeat decisively its own (national) bourgeoisie; the final, complete and unbreakable victory of Socialism involves the Soviet Union's ability of overcoming the international, the world bourgeoisie.

And Duranty who is so interested in inventing "Stalinism" and then hailing his invention as an "advance and difference from Leninism", might be interested to learn that at the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. it was none other than Stalin himself who emphasized this distinction by very properly saying:

"The Party says that the proletariat of a single country is incapable of overcoming the world bourgeoisie by its own efforts. The Party says that in order to achieve the final victory of Socialism in a single country it is necessary to overcome, or at least to neutralize the world bourgeoisie. The Party says that this is a task that can be fulfilled only by the proletariat of several countries. Therefore, final victory in one country or another means the victory of the proletarian revolution at least in several countries." (our emphasis).

Merely to supplement, and bring into bold relief the falsity of Duranty's concoctions about certain phases of the struggle in the C. P. S. U. let me cite the following explanation by Bukharin, made simultaneously with the one just cited

from Stalin:

"It would be absurd to commence an argument—that the question as to whether we have guarantees for the constructing of Socialism under any international situation, in the event say of intervention on the part of the capitalist countries. It is clear that the sole guarantee against dangers from without is international revolution."

Lenin and the Question of Socialist Construction

No one who is acquainted with history and grasps the fundamental problems of the Soviet revolution could come to Duranty's conclusion. Not only is the present general economic policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union not "Stalinism", not only is the "construction of Socialism" in the U.S.S.R. not "Stalinism" (an "advance and difference from Leninism") but the whole question is not a new one at all.

The question of building Socialist economy in a single country was brought up by none other than Lenin in 1915. And it was in this year that Trotsky made the charge of "narrow nationalism"—against Lenin and not against Bukharin or Stalin.

In 1915 in an article in the Social Democrat, then the central organ of the Bolsheviks, Lenin stated:

"Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. From this it follows that the victory of Socialism at first in a few, or even in a single country taken separately, is possible. The victorious proletariat of this country (where the proletarian dictatorship is in force, J. L.) having expropriated the capitalists and organized Socialist production in its own country would rise against the rest of the capitalist world, attract to its side the oppressed classes of other countries, raise revolt against the capitalists of those countries and, if necessary, take up arms against the exploiting classes in those states." (our emphasis).

To this blast of Lenin, Trotsky replied in his organ Nash Golos (Our Voice)

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On the Road to Bolshevism

HOW I BECAME A COMMUNIST

by D. S. Mirsky

D. S. Mirsky is the son of General Prince Mirsky, a well-known Czarist statesman and soldier. He was an enemy of the Soviet power upon its inception and fought in the Denikin counter-revolutionary armies. His conversion to the cause of the proletariat is described in the paragraphs below.

Mirsky is now teaching the Russian language and literature at the University of London. He is the author of an excellent book on Lenin, reviewed in a recent issue of the Revolutionary Age.

It is not quite the normal thing for a bourgeois intellectual who is no longer very young and who has never been in touch with the working class movement to develop into a Marxist and a Leninist, but when such a thing happens to him, it, incidentally, becomes his duty as a Marxist to analyze the reasons that made it possible.

For those of us who had eyes to see and minds to think with, the great Russian Revolution offered many a lesson.

The realities of the class struggle in 1917 were so palpable that it was difficult not to become a Marxist at least in the sense of realizing that the war between classes was indeed the bed-rock of all history.

The White Army too, taught me a thing or two. To see at close quarters that band of robbers and torturers was to become very uneasy about the cause that was that of my class.

But the real change came when we became emigres and exiles. From the position of a governing class at home we had been brought down to the position of servants and dependents of alien masters, of the European and American bourgeoisie.

We were able to see Western capitalism from below, to see it as those who had turned us out had seen us in Russia.

Few of us were able to profit by this new point of view.

Hopes of Intervention

The overwhelming majority preferred to cling to what remained of their past privileges, to trade on memories and to make the best use of personal relations, with the governing class of the West.

And, of course, the overwhelming majority placed all their hope in a more or less prompt return to Russia and to the property that had been theirs, a return which, it was very well realized, could only be the outcome of foreign intervention.

It was this idea of intervention and of alliance with foreign capitalists against Russian workmen and peasants that provided the principal starting point for a revision of our counter-revolutionary attitude.

Still, from 1921 onwards an increasing number of emigres became what may be called "National-Bolsheviks"

Their attitude may be roughly summed up as follows: Whatever one thought of Communism, the Communists had shown themselves better patriots than the Whites.

The Whites had allied themselves with the foreigner; the Communists had turned the foreigner out and established a Workers' and Peasants' State which was more genuinely and completely independent than even the Tsarist government—the debtor of French and English capitalists—had been.

The "National-Bolshevik" attitude was made speciously plausible by the Nep (New Economic Policy).

To any but the trained Leninist eye, what was going on in Russia in the years following 1921 seemed to be a gradual transformation of the Communist state into a bourgeois democracy of peasants. For myself, who had always been rather innocent of political knowledge, the principal object of interest and attraction was the young Soviet literature which came into such prominence in the early years of the Nep.

It was itself unpolitical (the proletarian writers were as yet groping for expression) and seemed to reflect the same ideal of a Russia which, tho rejuvenated by the Revolution, was still the same "eternal" Russia.

Towards Communism

It was my favorable attitude as a literary critic to some of these Soviet writers that first made the guardians of the 100% counter-revolutionary mentality suspicious on my account.

And tho my attitude then was a vague and sloppy non-political aestheticism, it did turn out to be a stage on the way towards Communism. Non-political aestheticism is as a general rule counter-revolutionary, but if it is a protest against counter-revolutionary politics it may become the reverse.

For myself, what made me realize that between the capitalists and the workmen of the West I must take sides with the workmen, was the British General Strike of 1926.

I saw little or nothing of the strikers and what impressed me was not the behavior of the workmen, but that of the bourgeoisie. It was the swarms of black-legs from Oxford and Cambridge that impressed me most.

It went home to the very depth of my consciousness that this united front of the English bourgeoisie was as much my enemy as the enemy of the English workmen. If there was one single moment in my life which made me a Communist it was this.

But tho my emotional "conversion" was now almost complete, it took some time for the intellect to follow the emotions, and it was not till much later that I came to Marxism.

The idealist education which I have already alluded to was in the way. The idealism that flourished among the Russian bourgeoisie after 1905 was a particularly fantastic and irresponsible form of idealism, heavily mixed with the most shamelessly absurd forms of religious orthodoxy and trained to talk a language admirably suited to express nothing at all.

This idealism was one of the most apparent symptoms of the rottenness of a class doomed to a quick and inglorious death.

Out of the Jungle

To emerge out of this jungle into the

4. In every united front move that we enter we must at all time see to it that the masses involved are kept informed of developments and that our position is constantly placed clearly and openly before them. We should not hesitate to criticize sharply, in a constructive fashion, all vacillation and all mistakes on the part of those with whom we have established a united front.

BUILDING SOCIALISM IN THE U.S.S.R.

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in 1915, by raising the issue of "narrow nationalism":

"Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism! From this Social Democrat draws the conclusion that the victory of Socialism in a single country is possible . . . To regard the perspectives of the social revolution from the national outlook is to fall a prey to narrow nationalism which in fact is social patriotism."

In 1919, in his article "Economics and Politics in the Epoch of the Proletarian Dictatorship", Lenin further emphasized:

"From the point of view of fundamental economic problems, the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in our country, the victory of Communism over capitalism, is assured. It is precisely for this reason that the bourgeoisie of the whole world is furious and raves against Bolshevism and is organizing military crusades, conspiracies, etc., against the Bolsheviks: it is because they perfectly well understand that our success in the work of reconstructing social economy is assured, unless they crush us by military force and to crush us in this manner they will fail to do."

Again in his pamphlet on the "Agricultural Tax" Lenin insisted that the Soviet proletariat can and must build "a Socialist foundation for our economy". In his famous speech before the Moscow Soviet, Lenin spoke of the Communist Party's having "brought Socialism into everyday life" and that "NEP Russia will become Socialist Russia". Still Duranty, as a sort of bourgeois professor emeritus of world history, can only persist in saying: "Lenin's new economic policy was a flagrant retreat from orthodox Marxism" and that "Stalin has had the will and strength to correct that change of the compass and bring the Soviet ship back to the Marxist course We wonder how Stalin welcomes this 'compliment'. We are not now speaking of his blotters in the other sections of the Communist International.

In Trotsky's repeated polemics against this viewpoint of Lenin, he always harped on "the impossibility of isolated construction within national state boundaries." Trotsky's argument was that "the struggle for revolutionary political self-preservation during this period has resulted in the extreme diminution of productive forces" and that "Socialism, however, is conceivable only on the basis of flourishing growth." (Addendum to the Peace Program, 1922).

Well, the results of the Five Year Plan to date—and in no small measure the great economic progress even before the Five Year Plan—have answered Trotsky very decisively and have proven with

equal force the correctness of Lenin that the Soviet proletariat today does have "all that is necessary and sufficient for the construction of complete Socialist society" and that altho "this is not yet the construction of Socialist society completed . . . it is all that is necessary and sufficient for this construction." (Lenin: On Cooperation).

Certainly Lenin did not see the building of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. merely as a matter of formal decrees or mechanical orders, and without difficulties, mistakes, or retreats. Meeting Trotsky's objections and showing how the building of Socialism is a process, comes in stages, Lenin time and again declared that "the one and only real basis for stabilizing resources for the establishment of Socialist society is large scale industry." With all the brilliant logic at his command, Lenin told the Party and the Comintern: "We know that only an understanding with the peasantry can save the social revolution until the revolution is ready to break out in other countries. We must speak practically on this matter in all meetings, and in our press."

The forward march of collectivization of Soviet agriculture and the rapid up-building of large-scale heavy industries in the U.S.S.R. have proven to the hilt that the success of the Soviet Union is precisely because the Soviet government is led by a Leninist Party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with policies firmly founded on Leninism and not on some "theories" evolved in the brains of ingenious bourgeois journalists ("Stalinism" by Duranty) or in the clique strategy of factionalists.

Of course, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the whole world proletariat and all the oppressed colonial masses have had the good fortune to have a sort of a "respite" afforded the Soviet Union. The present great world-wide economic crisis of capitalism is especially helpful in many respects. The increasingly acute antagonisms among the imperialist powers, the sharpening class struggle in the capitalist countries, the rising tide of colonial revolt, the very example and inspiration of daily Soviet successes, all have served as tremendous forces for giving the Soviet Union the necessary "breathing spell" and are objectively preparing the ground for the final victory of Socialism in the Soviet Union and throughout the world.

For Hoover in 1932

The effort to humanize Herbert Hoover is progressing famously. The other day the entire nation was thrilled and relieved to learn from newspaper front pages that the great prosperity-dispenser does not like guindrops as much as good cigars.

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Money Isn't Everything

It is revealed that Harvard pays bricklayers less than the union scale and scrub-women less than the Massachusetts legal minimum wage. But think of the great honor that goes with working for a great university!