

A Farewell to Bureaucracy

By JOSEPH ZACK

In the previous article I spoke about the system of falsification and trickery used by the Stalin faction in the ideological struggle against the Opposition in the Russian Communist Party. This system naturally expressed itself also in the field of party organization. The false line could be put through only by crushing out party democracy and setting up the uncontrolled rule of a bureaucratic clique. This was done in the Russian party, and then the completed system was mechanically imposed on all the parties of the Communist International.

We in the American movement had to pay for the defeat of Leninist principles and methods in the Russian party. The degeneration of the American C. P. can never be understood until it is traced to this source. The internal regime of the C. P. in this country is only an expression of the Stalinist system which has become universal in the C. I.

Suppressing the Opposition

They began in Russia by suppressing the platform of the Opposition instead of abiding by party statutes and allowing its publication as a document for discussion. Next, they expelled the 14 members of the minority of the Central Committee before the party congress! Meanwhile all their followers were expelled from the party. The result was that when the party congress finally convened it was a mere assemblage of Stalin's caucus. Later on, all those adhering to the Opposition were arrested and exiled to Siberia or imprisoned. Thus the Opposition was "disposed of". Thereafter anyone voicing its ideas was dealt with as a "counter-revolutionist", picked up at night by the G.P.U. and shipped somewhere—sometimes, as in the case of Blumkin, even executed. Now it appears this sort of thing is to be carried out on a wholesale scale.

This is the background of the present terror regime in the Soviet party and the parties in capitalistic countries, including the U. S. This regime constitutes a fundamental departure from Lenin's conception of the party and its functions; it is a basically new system that has nothing to do with Leninism. It is of course foolish to think, and I was such a fool, that by complaining about it or appealing against one or another bad spot or ulcer in this system to the E.C.C.I., a sub-committee of Stalin, any remedy can be obtained.

The Stalin Regime

The party regime introduced by Stalin throughout the Communist International is as follows:

1. Centralism, minus inner democracy.
2. Hierarchical method of selecting the leading personnel from the top down.

The method of putting this across with a semblance of "democracy" and greasing the workings of it is: a) To permit discussion of the execution of the general line set from the top; b) a system of "ratification" from below to confirm the selection from the top.

Since those who might have any principled objection to this system as a whole are either eliminated or drop out of the movement beforehand, there is very little or no trouble in getting things "ratified" or "approved" in that form.

The theory to justify the whole system and make it appealing is: (1) Solid iron Bolshevik unity of our party; (2) we are a party that thinks and acts alike; (3) only a monolithic party can be mobile, ready to act at a moment's notice, etc.

As good as this sounds, it is all false, because the democratic processes essential to arrive at such results are eliminated. Once the basic principal line of a revolutionary party—dictatorship of the proletariat, overthrow of capitalism versus social democratic peaceful, gradual transformation of capitalism into socialism—is set, many opinions of major importance may arise from time to time as to how to achieve it. There cannot be such a thing as "people that think alike" on

these matters. There can be, by majority decision, **unity of action** through discipline, yes, and this is all that Lenin aimed at in his conception of centralization and proletarian democracy. Not every little thing need be discussed by everybody; **but the big things**, these are precisely the ones that must be discussed and decided democratically. Stalinism allows the discussion of little things; the big questions are decided from on top.

Conditions for Real Discussion

There can be no such thing as a real discussion without giving equal opportunity to the advocates of various platforms and allowing groupings of opinion and their representation up till the convention. Lenin even allowed it on the Central Committee. But after a decision has been made democratically, **all must carry it out in action.** This is the essence of democratic centralism as Lenin taught it and as the party practiced it in Lenin's time.

All these rights still exist, largely, in the rules and by-laws and even in official theory of the Comintern. But who can truthfully deny that in practice they have abolished all and sundry? What hypocrisy to preach to others about "inner democracy"—as the Daily Worker does to the Socialist Party—when inner democracy has been murdered in the ranks of the C. P. itself!

There cannot be such a thing as "forbidden" subjects in a discussion amongst those who stand on the principle of the overthrow of capitalism and Soviet power. Otherwise there cannot be either "discussion" or inner democracy. But this is precisely what Stalin's system has created—only Stalin's views are "kosher"; the rest are excommunicable. Let the doctors of Stalinism, on the basis of this kind of a recipe, create a better inner life in the party. Even if they were professors they would be wasting their time; it cannot be done. The party is dying of inner sterility, of dry rot, because the system is false to the core.

In a previous issue of the *New Militant* I have already explained, except for some minor details, the inner workings of the party machine under this system. I only want to add an item or two.

Show Business

There is still in the party the staging of so-called "discussions". Of course, these are not discussions at all, but mere "talkings to" or "explanations" of the line already laid down from above; one is allowed only to discuss its "application". There is also the staging of conventions and plenums at which the mere rumor of some one's dissenting creates a sensation.

Prior to the convention there is supposed to be a 60-day discussion period. The press is opened for discussion articles, etc., etc. My dear readers, look over the last convention discussion of the C. P.—the most senile and flabby thing yet seen on such occasions. You may be deceived into thinking that in all the problems facing the working-class there is not one dissenting opinion; in fact, it is made to appear that there is no variety whatever—they all agree on everything!

The followers of Stalin boast that Stalin united the party more than Lenin ever succeeded in doing. And he did—**by killing the internal life of the party!**

What are the "discussions" that take place, after all? Well, the "big shot" makes a lengthy report. Then everybody talks his head off about his own troubles in the district, section or unit, hardly mentioning the report of the "big shot", or in order to be perfectly "kosher", quoting one thing or another from it. At the end of this "discussion" the line of the report is approved. If anyone disagrees, he leaves his disagreement for perhaps a better time.

Nothing is threshed out in particular. If there is a "new line" in the report it is put in suavely in order "not to alarm the party" and to safeguard the continuity of the line and the infallibility and con-

tinuity of leadership. In brief, the convention is treated as a sort of glorified mass meeting, where "the line" is talked into you. Nothing is expected to happen and nothing does happen. Everything is cut and dried.

This Stalinist system of talking to the gallery has its strongest appeal to new, politically inexperienced members—that is, for a while—and there is always a hullabaloo about the promotion of new forces, etc. The older militants are not in favor. They simply don't like it, although they don't know what the real trouble is.

At general membership meetings, which are hardly ever held nowadays, questions are very often asked on unsigned slips of paper—a custom emanating from Soviet Russia, for even questions are at times dangerous.

How is it in the Soviet Union? Worse. There one really takes a chance by thinking out loud, not only on big questions but often on little ones as well. If you are a new one you may get away with it for a while. But "watch your step" You may chatter a-plenty, but no heavy talk. This is the inner life, the atmosphere created by Stalin's system in the life of the party.

In the next article I will deal with the policies and methods that form part of this system as practiced in this country, with special reference to the trade union question.

How The Middle "Freed" Negroes

"The Republican Party Is the Sea," Le

This is the second of a series of articles on Negro Labor in the United States.

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By SIMON WILLIAMSON

It was but natural that the Negro middle class should become the first spokesman and leader of the newly "freed" Negroes during the early post-Civil War period. It represented whatever culture and influence the race then possessed. It was cognizant of this fact and was not long in taking advantage of its new opportunity.

Even during the antebellum days this middle class was composed of servants and freedmen. The freedmen had either bought their freedom or won it through some act of benevolence to their masters and in some instances they were the proud owners of Negro slaves. The servants and this class were artisans who had been given long periods of apprenticeship under master craftsmen. They were the craftsmen of their masters. This class represented, then, the most militant spirits of the Negro slaves, and they despised the poor whites since many of the latter had been employed as overseers and, moreover, it was they who were used to catch runaway slaves. The white master class, even then, was shrewd enough to play one against the other.

Frederick Douglass

Shortly after the emancipation of the American Negroes from chattel slavery Frederick Douglass, the most outstanding Negro in the abolitionist movement and the most towering figure that black America has yet produced—the last of his type that the Negro bourgeoisie will ever produce—discovered that the white ruling class kept both white and black in subjection by playing one against the other. In an interview, heading a committee of Negroes, with president Andrew Johnson, who arrogated to himself the leadership of the poor whites, seeking equal citizenship for the blacks, he is recorded as having said to Johnson:

"The hostility between whites and blacks is easily explained. It has its root and sap in the relation of slavery and was incited on both sides by the cunning slave masters. Those masters