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The Tito Affair and Stalinism

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The Tito affair has thrown considerable light on the much debated question of the social nature of Stalinism. With one blow, Stalinism has lost the peculiar fascination of success, which, since the end of the war, it exerted even on certain revolutionists. The Russian regime, whose admirers as well as whose most implacable enemies – in words ! – proclaim its "astonishing stability," has become a regime devoured by internal crisis. The territorial expansion of Russia, cited by so many of our superficial critics as a "definitive refutation" of the Trotskyist thesis, revealed itself as a projection outside the Russian borders of the internal contradictions gnawing Stalinism.

Intense Contradiction

The Tito affair defines the essential elements of Soviet policy in Eastern Europe. This policy seeks to utilize and exploit these countries for the strategic, political and economic objectives pursued by the Soviet bureaucracy.

If it is true that experience has taught Stalin that it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain the desired results through collaboration with the traditional capitalist elements. But the Kremlin has also learned another no less important lesson. The elimination of the bourgeoisie from control of the economy and the state cannot be realized without a mobilization, however limited, of the masses. The Communist parties of these countries can achieve such a mobilization only to the extent that they maintain their effective influence among the laboring masses. *But the more these parties seek to keep their mass base, the more sensitive they become to the pressure of the workers. The more they take into account the sentiments of the workers, the more their power tends to correspond to the social conditions of their own countries – and to become independent of the rigorous control of the Kremlin.*

Stalinist Puppets

That is why it is not enough for Stalin to rid himself of Petkov, Mikolaczyk and Masaryk. He has to seek to eliminate the Stalinist leaders who are most closely connected with the workers' movement and replace them with mere puppets who owe their power exclusively to the Kremlin. That is why Stalin tries in Rumania, Hungary, Poland and elsewhere to push into prominence in the Stalinist parties such personalities as the Rumanian Bodnaras, who have no past of any sort in the Communist movement of their countries and who spent a decade or two of their lives in Russia. This is why he seeks to maintain the non-Communist political organizations while imposing on them a new leadership subservient to the Kremlin. That is why in Eastern Germany he authorizes and even favors the creation of a new middle class nationalist party which serves him as a counter weight to the Stalinist SED party.

Not an Accident

It is not by accident that Stalin has seen his first failure in Yugoslavia, where the Tito regime has the greatest mass support, where the country has experienced the most profound social overturn, and where the bourgeois opposition is the most insignificant and prostrate. Stalin wants to decapitate the most solid CP. It is wholly logical that the first refusal to capitulate should come from there.

Seeks Compromise

Contrary to all false appearances, we have never ceased to repeat that Stalin, far from seeking to extend a new social system over the entire world ; sought fundamentally a compromise with world imperialism. The Tito affair provides explosive confirmation of our analysis. It incontestably shows how impossible it is for Stalinism to expand in an unlimited fashion.

The relation between the Kremlin and the Stalinist parties in "power" are modified to the extent that these parties enjoy the confidence of large masses. It is evident that Stalin, who views favorably the armies of Mao Tse-dun harassing the forces of Chiang Kai-shek in China – a formidable trump card in his bargaining with Washington – considers with growing uneasiness any definitive victory on the part of Mao Tse-dun. *If Tito, in a country so tiny in comparison to Russia, has already dared to rebel, what would be the attitude tomorrow of a CP dominating a country such as China ? The more Stalinism expands, the greater become the centrifugal forces it unleashes.*

Smelling the sensational aspect of the conflict, the ignorant section of the capitalist press shouts from the roof tops that the Tito defection breaches the strategic potential of the USSR in Eastern Europe. It is true that Tito has created a breach, but not in the place where the capitalists are looking for it. A breach has just been created in the ossified consciousness of scores of thousands of Communist members in Yugoslavia, in Switzerland, in all the countries of Eastern Europe, and one hopes, of the entire world ; a breach in their belief in the infallibility of Stalin. This means a breach in the whole ideological edifice so painstakingly constructed on the basis of the USSR as "the only fatherland of all the workers." The word "degeneration" is already circulating in the Yugoslav CP cadres, and not only there !

It is now ten years since the end of the Moscow trial when' Stalin massacred the old Bolshevik guard. That was the end of the initial period of Stalinism, during which Stalin did not yet dare break openly with the formulas of Leninism. The following period witnessed a series of abject crimes, not the least of which was the systematic poisoning of the workers of the USSR and the entire World with nationalist poison.

Today history is beginning to revenge itself on Stalin. We cannot but feel a certain satisfaction before the spectacle which makes the very instruments of Stalin's crimes, the instrument of his punishment.

Ten Years

If the Communist advance guard of several countries will succeed in drawing conclusions from the Tito affair – and they should be helped in this task with all our strength – it will signify an important step toward the regeneration of the world labor movement as well as the regeneration of the USSR.