

Gitlow Descends to Sheer Falsification

Third Article in the Review of "I Confess"

By B. HERMAN

(This is the last of a series of three articles by B. Herman reviewing Benjamin Gitlow's book, "I Confess." The other articles appeared in the last two issues of this paper.—Editor.)

BENJAMIN Gitlow's book, "I Confess," reveals that deep within him there has smoldered for two decades a consuming ambition for leadership together with a burning resentment against all other leaders of the movement who have displayed greater ability, intellectual capacity and energy. This was never so evident as in his "confession." His book reveals that he was always obsessed with fantastic notions of conspiracies afoot to keep him from his rightful place of leadership. For example, when he came out of prison in 1922, he saw a conspiracy to keep him out of the post of party secretary. Leaders in the communist movement at that time tell me that they were totally unaware of any such conspiracy for the simple reason that no one then had the slightest idea that Gitlow was a fit, capable or appropriate candidate for the post as against Charles E. Ruthenberg.

EXAMPLES OF FALSIFICATION

Gitlow's estimates of other people are generally lacking in the most elementary honesty. I do not have the space here in which to follow him thru every one of his falsifications, but I will deal briefly with three examples.

Jay Lovestone, leader of the "Majority" group in the Communist Party, secretary of the party, and now secretary of the I.L.L.A., naturally appears as Gitlow's chief target. In the entire book, he devotes only one favorable line to Lovestone—that in 1929, Lovestone alone among the American party leaders (Bertram D. Wolfe was then out of the country) opposed the pushing thru of a shameful resolution condemning Bukharin, at a time when the real issues dividing Bukharin and Stalin were quite unknown in this country. Otherwise, Gitlow misses no opportunity to libel Lovestone. Having no basis of fact for his attack, he simply invents. Lacking any great capacity for invention, he is compelled to turn to Stalin's Daily Worker for the inspiration of his major "revelations."

In 1924, Lovestone sent Gitlow a letter in which he referred to "John" and "Zinn." Gitlow explains: "'John' is John Pepper and 'Zinn' is affectionate New York City College style for Zinoviev." The level of this comment is an accurate indication of the Gitlow calibre. Does one have to be a college graduate to abbreviate names? How infinitely petty! Apparently, Gitlow has never forgiven Lovestone for having had a college education!

WHAT GITLOW HAS "FORGOTTEN"

But even Gitlow realizes that a case cannot be built up on abbreviations of Russian names, or on a rather imaginative description of Lovestone's facial characteristics. So he "confesses" the 1920 "defection" of Lovestone "who came to an understanding regarding his freedom from prosecution by appearing as a witness for the state against Harry Winitsky." What he fails to mention is that this revelation is simply a carbon copy of the slanderous attack made on Lovestone by Earl Browder in Stalin's Daily Worker, December 23, 1929.

Max Eastman Says He Didn't Do It

Croton-on-Hudson, N. Y.
Editor, Workers Age:

THANKS to B. Herman for the compliment of attributing the good writing in "I Confess" to my ghost! It is a compliment, for where it is good, Gitlow's writing really is good. I attribute its spasmodic character to the fact that he is an orator, rather than a writer, and eloquent only when "roused up."

Anyway, I had nothing to do, whether as "translator," writer, ghost-writer, rewrite-man or reviser, with any sentence of Ben Gitlow's book.

MAX EASTMAN

Ben Gitlow, as editor of the Revolutionary Age, answered the Browder slander in two issues of the paper, Vol. I, Nos. 6 and 8, January 15 and February 15, 1930. Gitlow published the Decision of the International Control Commission of the Communist International exonerating Lovestone after Foster and Cannon had pressed charges in 1925. He published a letter of Charles E. Ruthenberg written March 14, 1922, stating that he (Ruthenberg) had instructed Lovestone to appear at the trial on the basis of a previous ruling of the Executive Committee of the party; that the Executive Committee had later freed Lovestone from all responsibility in appearing. He also wrote that Ferguson, then an outstanding party leader and a prominent attorney, had stated "that he was present during the proceedings and Lovestone followed the instructions given him by the attorney representing Winitsky, and further, that he has read and studied the proceedings and that there is nothing that Comrade Lovestone said that was not already a part of the proceedings, and that nothing he said could have been of any material effect in influencing the outcome."

Gitlow also published a full-page article by Harry Winitsky, himself entitled "The Facts Speak For Themselves." I cannot reproduce here Winitsky's long article. Suffice it to point out that Winitsky insisted that "Browder lies when he states that Lovestone agreed to testify against me when he was offered immunity from prosecution." He stressed that Lovestone had simply carried out party instructions, and that his appearance in court was legally mandatory. Winitsky told how, from 1921 to 1925, he was under continuous pressure from the Foster-Lore-Cannon caucus, of which he was a member, to press charges against Lovestone. He described how, at a caucus meeting he attended, at which Lore, Poyntz, Krumbein, Grecht, London and Cannon were present, plans were discussed to frame up Lovestone. After Lovestone's complete exoneration by the Communist International commission in 1925, Winitsky, while yet a member of the Foster-Cannon Group, sent Lovestone a letter of apology for the methods used against him, a letter that puts the finishing touches on exposing the Browder-Gitlow slander.

GITLOW DISHES UP THE OLD SLANDER

"The facts speak for themselves." Gitlow is well acquainted with these facts. For twelve years after the Winitsky trial, he continued to

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associate very closely with Lovestone, and during most of that period, he fought bitterly in the party to establish Lovestone's leadership. Thru all these years, Gitlow was aware that for almost a decade, those elements in the communist movement whom he now denounces as most corrupt and unprincipled were attempting to use the Winitsky trial to frame up Lovestone. Yet, without so much as mentioning one word of this in his book, after even the Stalinists had let the matter rest after Winitsky's devastating reply to Browder, Gitlow dishes out the old libel. It is thus that Gitlow and Browder meet after a separation of ten years.

Gitlow's "confession" for Bert Wolfe is on no higher level. He writes that after the Red raids of 1919, "Wolfe shirked all party activities, disappeared from his post. . . . After many months, news began to trickle in that Wolfe had left the country and made his residence in Mexico. The rank-and-file comrades did not relish what seemed to them cowardice in a leader." Gitlow has, as usual, completely garbled his facts in order to get in his typical innuendo. The facts are that Wolfe, for many months, edited a paper for the Central Committee of the party subsequent to the Red raids. He then became leader of the party in California, and represented the California organization at the Bridgman underground convention in 1922, at which Gitlow was present. He never dropped his party activities, and did not leave for Mexico until after the Bridgman convention. There, he helped organize and lead the Communist Party of Mexico until 1925. It was none other than Ben Gitlow who was insistent that Wolfe come to work with him in the New York party district in 1925. If Gitlow's memory is so poor, it would not have required much trouble to verify these easily ascertainable facts. If Gitlow doesn't even know that Wolfe was not in Mexico from 1919 to 1922, it is obvious that his remarks about "shirking party duties" and "cowardice" are as worthless as his other "facts."

ANOTHER FRAME-UP

Gitlow's treatment of the spy charges against Louis C. Fraina in the early days of the movement is

another example of his type of "confession." He states that Fraina was cleared by the investigating committee, but adds that several members of the committee voted "no," giving the implication that at least some impartial judges considered Fraina guilty. He forgets to mention that those who voted against Fraina were those who had cooked up the charges, that subsequently the Central Committee of the party unanimously cleared Fraina, that later an investigation was made in Moscow, with the well-known French communist Rosmer as chairman of a committee including two members of Gitlow's own Communist Labor Party, and that this committee unanimously exonerated Fraina. Nor does he see fit to mention that John Reed, one of the few communist leaders whose errors Gitlow's doesn't "confess," appeared before the committee and testified in Fraina's behalf or that Lenin subsequently endorsed the decision of the committee exonerating Fraina. All this Gitlow fails to mention in order to stir up suspicion about a matter long since completely cleared up. There is an ugly word for this type of Gitlow "confession." We leave it to our readers to fill in.

Gitlow's treatment of Ruthenberg, Pepper and other people is equally malicious.

Gitlow's book indicates that his own degeneration has kept pace with Stalin's. He, the intransigent opponent of Stalin, has adopted the Stalinist methods of frame-up, vilification and downright slander. The mud-throwing and character-assassination of neither a Stalin nor a Gitlow can destroy leaders who have maintained firmly their devotion to the cause of labor. Basically, the working-class movement judges leaders by the principles they uphold and by what they do, not by the factional slanders levelled against them by unscrupulous enemies. By such a standard Stalin and Gitlow will be judged in their turn by their principles and their deeds. And Gitlow's book of "confessions" will hardly stand as evidence in his favor!

MAY DAY GREETINGS
from
Wilkes Barre (Pa.) Branch
I.L.L.A.