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# Lenin and Trotsky: A Comment on Max Eastman's Book, *Since Lenin Died*.

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You have, I see, found it necessary to give some attention to Max Eastman's book, *Since Lenin Died*. As Mr. Eastman in his book attempts to depict me as a violent opponent of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party vainly endeavoring to protest against its actions, I shall be obliged if you allow me to explain the situation to English readers of this book.

Eastman throws no light on the work of the Russian Communist Party. History has imposed upon this Party a most responsible and difficult task. They have to build Communism in an economically backward country during a period when capitalism in countries more advanced economically is temporarily stabilized.

Eastman's book shows nothing of this. It is a collection of petty gossip. There is nothing of what is ac-

tually happening; nothing of our vast economic achievements, or of the cultural awakening of the masses; nothing of the tremendous work of laying a secure foundation for the slogans of the November Revolution.

The author is only concerned to gather up and smack his lips over every scrap of gossip and color it with his petty-bourgeois anarchist leanings.

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The most monstrous thing in Eastman's book is his treatment of the "Lenin Enrollment." When Lenin died hundreds of thousands of workers flocked into the Communist Party to help carry Lenin's work on to a triumphant end. The whole working class rallied round the Party and its Central Committee. The new applicants for membership were examined at open meetings in the factories and workshops, and enthusi-



Krupskaya with members of the "Down With Illiteracy" Society, 1927

astic non-party workers decided whether the applicants known to them were fit for the honor of membership. Never has there been such an expression of confidence in our Party as was given by the Russian workers in selecting their best to go forward as units in the “Lenin Enrollment.”

Lenin’s dearest wish was realized. The Russian Communist Party became, not only in its ideology, but in its composition, overwhelmingly proletarian.

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Eastman knows nothing of this. In his eyes the workers are merely pawns, understanding nothing; waiting to be led by any leader. To him the “intelligentsia” is the salt of the earth.

We Bolsheviks understand the workers quite otherwise — to us the more workers in the Party the better. And these workers know that the Central Committee consists of comrades who during years worked with Lenin, deliberated with him every step, and with him built up the Party. In jail and in exile his work was theirs and theirs his. The working masses know their leaders better than any passing writer forming conclusions from the outside.

These old Bolsheviks have since Lenin’s death felt a double weight of responsibility — a weight they could not have borne without the confidence and support of the masses. Lenin’s death united them and the masses still more closely by the obvious need to carry his work to a successful conclusion.

It was in this frame of mind that I wrote to Trotsky the personal letter which Eastman has misrepresented. Lenin considered Trotsky a talented worker faithful in the interests of the revolution and to the working class. That was his view to the end — and such an appreciation calls for thinking of when I wrote to Trotsky.

Trotsky, of course, could not draw from this letter the conclusion that Lenin considered him his successor; or regarded him as understanding his views better than anybody else.

I could not possibly write anything of the sort — or that Lenin was always at one with Trotsky. Everybody in the Russian Party knows otherwise.

Eastman invents various fictions about Lenin’s letters to the Party Congresses — calling them “testaments.” Eastman fails absolutely to understand the spirit of our Party. For us a congress is not a muster of bureaucrats but a supreme Party occasion upon which every member must express himself with the utmost frankness regardless of personal considerations. It was thus that Lenin thought about them. He knew that the Party would understand the motives that dictated his letters — and that they would be read and considered only by those about whom there could be not doubt that the interests of the Revolution stood above everything.

If in these letters there is criticism of certain comrades and an indication of their faults, there is also, and to a far larger degree, praise of them. Of this praise Eastman says nothing. The letters were intended, and understood as, helps to organization — to the allocation of tasks. To call them “testaments” is folly.

The real Testament of Lenin is contained in the last articles he wrote and relates to fundamental questions of Party and Soviet work. All these articles have been published. But Eastman finds nothing of interest in them. He is too busy helping the enemies of the Russian Communist Party to calumniate and discredit the Central Committee by alleging that the “testament” (meaning the letters above-mentioned) has been “concealed.”

Finally, the part of Eastman’s book which deals with Trotsky himself seems to me extremely insulting to Trotsky. It is needless for me to unravel the network of lies Eastman has woven around the question of our Party differences with Trotsky. Others have done that. Suffice it to say that the whole question took an acute form solely because the whole Party felt keenly the need, after Lenin’s death, for ideological unity. Personally I was not in agreement with Trotsky and spoke accordingly on several occasions. I also criticized his *Lessons of October* in detail in *Pravda*.

I was throughout in agreement with the views of the Central Committee. Eastman perverts the truth on this point as he does all through his book.

*Edited by Tim Davenport. Photo from O Nadezhde Krupskoi: Vospominaniia, ocherki, stat'i sovremennikov. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1988).  
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