

present. His volume is a reminder that most French Canadian leaders in the 1920s actively encouraged foreign investment and the industrialization which this investment would bring. The ideology of the intellectuals did not determine the policies of those French Canadians who exercised political power.

H.B. NEATBY,
Carleton University.

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WILLIAM BEECHING, PHYLLIS CLARKE, eds. — *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck*. Toronto: NC Press, 1977. Pp. xv, 414.

Tim Buck was General Secretary of the Communist Party of Canada from 1929 until 1962, and Chairman of the party from then until his death in 1973, thus establishing a record for longevity in office unequalled by any other Communist Party leader anywhere in the world. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International from 1935 until the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. From the year he arrived in Canada (1910) until his death he was constantly involved in labour and socialist organizations. Obviously the honest and frank memoirs of such a man would be of immense value to historians.

Tim Buck, however, was not a man to provide anyone with his honest and frank memoirs. In articles, pamphlets and books published during his lifetime he systematically distorted the history of the Canadian communist movement to the greater glory of Tim Buck. Shortly after he became General Secretary the CPC began calling itself "Tim Buck's Party" — and Buck himself did everything possible to promote this Canadian version of the "cult of personality."

This book, compiled from tape recorded interviews made by the CBC in 1965, continues the process. Although the editors describe it as an autobiography, it is a remarkably incomplete account of Buck's life. Many critical events are omitted entirely; others are quite thoroughly falsified.

Buck's account of his own rise to the office of General Secretary in 1929 is characteristic. In *Reminiscences* he retells the story, familiar to readers of his *Thirty Years* (Progress Books, 1952) and other books, of his fight against the "Trotskyist" Maurice Spector (Party Chairman until 1928) and the "Lovestonite" Jack MacDonald (General Secretary until 1929). Unfortunately, as William Rodney has demonstrated in *Soldiers of the International* (University of Toronto Press, 1968), Buck's version is false in almost every detail: it is "a revision of history in the best traditions of Stalinism" (p. 156).

One could cite many more examples. Particularly glaring is the absence of any discussion of the crisis of Canadian Communism in 1957, during which the Party lost most of its membership and the Political Committee voted to remove Buck from office. Missing as well is any serious account of the Communist International: for example, there is no mention of the Comintern "commission" sent to Canada in 1930 to investigate charges made against Buck by the Party's large Finnish and Ukrainian auxiliary organizations.

Some of the falsifications are simply petty. In his major work on the history of the CPC, *Thirty Years*, Buck wrote that the 1929 Convention of the CPC elected only three of Buck's supporters to the Central Committee: "namely, Buck, Smith, and Bruce." (p. 66). This in itself is incorrect, since eight members of the Buck faction were elected, but see what becomes of the story in *Reminiscences*: "they elected a Central Committee with just Tom McEwen, Malcolm Bruce and me from

the opposition." (p. 138) The number three remains, but Stewart Smith has been replaced by Tom McEwen. Between the publication of *Thirty Years* and the recording of the *Reminiscences*, Stewart Smith had left the Communist Party: henceforth he was an unperson.

One might, of course, conclude that Buck's memory was fading by 1965, that poor memory rather than bad faith caused the many historical errors made in the *Reminiscences*. Such a view would be charitable, but not tenable. In 1968 Buck had his memory thoroughly refreshed by Rodney's carefully documented *Soldiers of the International*. This did not prevent him from repeating his own demonstrably false account in his last published book, *Lenin and Canada* (Progress Books, 1970). The truth did not reflect credit on Buck, so he sought to suppress it.

No one expects a politician's memoirs to be fully truthful, but even the most cynical of us should be shocked by Buck's constant disregard for truth. Only where the party line is not at stake can his account be trusted: for example, in his recollections of the Canadian socialist movement before the Russian Revolution, and in his description of life in prison in the 1930s. These passages are interesting, even exciting, but they are only a small part of the whole.

Buck's falsifications alone would not condemn this book. Even the most mendacious of memoirs can provide useful insights into the thoughts and character of their authors. Properly edited and annotated, they can make fine historical works. Such editing was not done in this case. In fact, I find myself wondering just what the editors did do. In the entire book they have added just one footnote. Apart from the major errors and omissions of the type cited above, there are dozens of minor factual errors in the book which the editors have neither identified nor corrected. In transcribing the tape recordings they have added errors of their own: for example, rendering U.S. Communist leader Jay Lovestone as "J. Lovestone" (Buck was certainly not so formal), and French CP leader Andre Marty as "Andre Marte." These are not major errors, but they would not have been made by anyone properly familiar with the subject.

One of the editors has provided a somewhat hagiographic Preface. In it he gives no indication that he is aware of the major omissions in the book, or of the contradictions between Buck's account and other published studies of the same events. A Foreword written by Buck's long-time colleague, Tom McEwen, shows even less critical spirit: indeed, McEwen finds it possible to praise this error-riddled book for displaying Buck's "concern for detail" p. viii).

For all of the inadequacies of *Yours in the Struggle*, its editors deserve congratulation for publishing an important historical document, especially since they did so in defiance of an attempt to suppress it. Both of the editors have been suspended from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada for releasing the *Reminiscences* against the Party leadership's instructions. It is a pity that, having decided to publish, they did not also decide to take their editorial responsibilities seriously.

What they have given us is neither autobiography nor history, but a raw historical document, virtually unedited. When historians come to write the history of the Canadian communist movement, Tim Buck's *Reminiscences* will provide some of the raw material: it should not be mistaken for history itself.

Ian ANGUS,
Willowdale, Ontario.