

World Socialism

Underestimating Czech Fascism

By HERBERT ZAM

Nothing can be so harmful to the working class as to underestimate the dangers of rising fascism and neglect to take measures against it. It is easy to cry, "There is no fascist danger. Everything is fine"; such an attitude obviates the necessity of action against fascism, and is wholly satisfactory for those who want no action. Socialists, however, must always be on guard to nip the fascist movement in the bud; delay will be very costly.

The recent elections in Czechoslovakia are a case in point. On the basis of the returns, the CALL reported them as a Fascist victory, a warning signal to the workers. What was our astonishment therefore, at receiving opposite interpretation by a leading Czech Socialist, Dr. Franz Soukup. Dr. Soukup's case is expressed in the opening paragraph of his article:

"On May 19th the General Election to the Czechoslovakian Parliament took place. This election was a success for democracy. Czechoslovakia is in no way endangered by Fascism. This is the main outcome of the most recent Parliamentary elections in the country."

FASCISTS GAIN

We must therefore take a second glance at the election results to determine whether there is a justification for such super-optimism. A total of more than 8,000,000 votes was cast, an increase of 15 per cent over the last elections in 1929. The parties making up the government, including the Socialists, received 3,480,000 (in round numbers, a loss of 260,000 votes over 1929. They secured 127 seats in Parliament, as against 150 held previously, a loss of 23 seats. Considering the larger participation in the elections, the Government parties suffered a loss of almost 20 per cent in their vote.

The fascist parties cast 1,880,000 votes. In 1929 they received only 430,000 votes, so that their increase is 1,450,000 votes or more than 300 per cent. In the old parliament they had 18 seats; now they have 67 seats, a gain of 49 seats.

AT SOCIALIST EXPENSE

What is even more significant, is that the fascists gained also at the expense of the Socialist Parties. In 1929 the two Socialist parties, German and Czech, secured together 1,470,000 votes and 60 seats. This time their vote sank to 1,500,000, a loss of 170,000, and their seats decreased by 11, to a total of 49. Thus in comparison with 1929, the Socialist parties lost almost 25 per cent! This loss is proportionally greater than that of the government bloc as a whole; that is, the fascists gained more heavily at the expense of the Socialist parties in the Government, than of the non-Socialist parties in the government. Even the gain of the Communists of almost 100,000 votes and two seats for a total of 850,000 votes and 30 seats does not offset the losses of the workers' parties, both absolutely and relatively.

These elections have significance not only for Czechoslovakia. We continually hear that argument that Socialists should participate in coalition governments together with non-Socialist parties so as to defeat fascism. In Czechoslovakia the Socialists have been in such a coalition government for over five years. The figures tell an eloquent story of how fascism has been "defeated" through this tactic. How can intelligent Socialists continue to argue for it?

In France where an entirely different tactic has been adopted, the results also were different.

One should not become panic stricken at a defeat. But the recognition of a defeat is the first prerequisite for converting defeat into victory.

IN RUSSIA

Only a few naive people will believe that the expulsion of A. Enukidze from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was part of the campaign for an "improved morality." Enukidze was a member of the Political Bureau, one of Stalin's right hand men, and one of the ablest administrators in the Party. He had never been connected with any of the "oppositions," and was an old Bolshevik. It takes a tremendous imagination to believe that such an individual would permit himself to become entangled in a situation resulting in expulsion for "moral turpitude." That there is more behind it than morality and relations with the opposite sex is made clear by vague hints about "Trotskyist conspiracy" and "political degeneracy" which were found in some of the dispatches.

Reading between the lines, it is not difficult to discern that Enukidze was punished because he was becoming dissatisfied with the inner-party regime and with some of the policies which Stalin is following. It even appears that Enukidze was beginning to question the wisdom of the continual extermination of all elements differing in the slightest from the leading Stalin group. And finally, it is not impossible that he was among those who were questioning the wisdom of the Franco-Soviet pact and the policies flowing from it. This view is strengthened by the simultaneous news of the liquidation of the Society of Old Bolsheviks and a new cleansing of the Party, directed against Trotskyists and Zinovievists.

OTHER EXPULSIONS

Enukidze is not the first sup-portee of the regime who became its victim. We recall the shameful exile and hounding to death of Riazanoff, the leading Marxian scholar, on the charge that he was harboring "enemies" of the Soviet Union. Skrypnik, another Old Bolshevik, a staunch Stalinite, a power in the Ukraine (he was incidentally, the godfather of the theory of the self-determination of the Negroes in the United States), committed suicide after he was denounced as being in league with "nationalist" elements. In neither case were the suspicious elements ever named, or brought to trial. And the incidents following upon the Kiroff assassination are still too fresh for comment, here.

In these cases, as at present, Stalin acted to eliminate possible focal points for opposition, not against the Soviet Government, but against his personal dictatorship in the Communist Party. So long as the undemocratic regime is maintained in the Party, we can expect a multiplication of such incidents.