

The Rock-Bottom Basic Question Is Raised in the CP Discussion

By GEORGE POST

"By now, no one can or should deny our party is in a crisis." These words begin the lead article, signed by one "M. D.," in the September issue of the *Party Voice*, the N. Y. State bulletin of the Communist Party. The rest of the issue gives dramatic evidence of the truth of this statement.

M. D.'s article is a good case in point for it attempts, without thoroughly coming to grips with the issue at stake, to re-evaluate "party democracy" or the complete lack thereof.

The article states that not only has the party in the past been bureaucratic and undemocratic but that even at present "The national leadership is debating these questions [raised by the 20th Party Congress] on top; differences are being concealed and at most 'compromise' positions are being made public, and at worst there is silence."

Consequently, the author asserts, "Our party is in rebellion and correctly so against bureaucratic authority."

"M.D." reflects, it is apparent, the basic thinking of the "Young Turks" faction within the CP, led by John Gates, *Daily Worker* editor, and the majority of the New York State Committee of the party. That is, it attacks the pro-Stalin forces, led by W. Z. Foster, the orthodox pro-Khrushchevites, led by Dennis, as well as the small faction which calls for the dissolution of the CP.

The article, while concerning itself with an analysis of what would be necessary to sufficiently democratize the CP, proposes steps in this direction which would still not make the CP a model of internal democracy. It, as well as many of the Gates groups, reflects the position of a younger, secondary leadership of the CP who lived somehow through the "white-chauvinism" purges of the CP in 1949-1950, in which hosts of leading figures on the local level were driven from the party, as M. D. in effect charges, without being "guilty of proven harmful acts against the party or the interests of the working class," and without a "fair trial before the body in which the accused is a member."

QUESTION ON RUSSIA

But the articles in this issue of the *Party Voice* go beyond the slightly critical tone of the "M.D." statement. In an unsigned piece "On the National Committee Statement," a worker brings into question the very foundation upon which the Stalinist movement exists: the conviction that Russia is a "socialist society."

Faction Organ Appears in British CP

The ferment in the Communist Parties has not passed Britain by. One sign is the publication of an open opposition organ by a group of CP intellectuals. Called *The Reasoner*, it is edited by John Saville and E. P. Thompson, both university lecturers. First issue appeared in July.

One article blasts R. Palme Dutt, long-time CP prince of theoretical rationalizers, for his analysis of the anti-Stalin campaign in the *Labour Monthly*.

Party assistant secretary George Matthews is another target. With not untypical politeness, editor Thompson asks: "Can he [Matthews] cover over cracks in the walls of our theory with this piece of soiled wallpaper?"—referring to an article by Matthews.

The American CP is applauded, and counterposed to the bad British Stalinists, for its frankness on the question of anti-Semitism in Russia.

Party leader John Gollan is denounced for slavish adherence to the Russian line. His booklet *The British Road to Socialism* should really be called *The Russian Road to Socialism, Done Into English*, says editor Thompson.

Tribune reports that this group has "strong support" and is "seeking out like-

The author of this document writes:

"Surely, the national committee must be aware that the character of Soviet society is questioned:

"(1) Can all the violations of socialist law . . . be attributed to one individual?

"(2) Were the crimes committed a violation of socialist law—or a departure from socialism?

"(3) If the present Soviet leaders were helpless to correct the situation—yet, why did they continue to build Stalin as demi-god?

"(4) Why did the brother parties learn the content of the Khrushchev speech, made in executive session, through the medium of the U. S. State Department?

"(5) Is the economic mode of production sufficient to characterize a society as socialist—if in the same society the people are deprived of their liberties for a long time?" (Italics added.)

Even though the author of this article then adds a few paragraphs piously repeating his belief that Russia is a socialist society, the very fact that the question is even raised, and that the CP has to publish a statement containing such a question, shakes the very foundations of the Stalinist party.

UNIONISTS OBJECT

In particular the active trade-unionists within the CP—trade-unionists who have for years labored within the trade-union movement as dutiful Stalinists, performing their tasks as assigned and seeing themselves increasingly isolated from the working-class because of the suicidal tactics of the CP—have become restive in the period of re-evaluation, are raising questions publicly which a little while ago they would not have raised even in private.

Thus a leading member of the CP caucus within District 65 (a union in which the CP was defeated in the past few years by a progressive anti-Stalinist caucus) attacks the "contemptuous attitude toward the thinking, experience and suggestions of the rank and file" on the part of the CP leadership.

He writes: "The tremendous gap in the levels of our party reflected itself . . .

mind Communist both in England and abroad. . . . Their policy is to stay inside the party and fight it out with the 'monolith.'"

Then in the Communist Party's Jewish organ, *Jewish Clarion*, an article by Professor H. Levy (well-known intellectual) went after the scalp of the editorial board for whitewashing the charges of anti-Semitism. Levy calls its editorial a mere bandage across a deep and festering wound."

"If 24 Jewish writers had been merely imprisoned in the U. S., we would have shouted to the high heavens about such a criminal action. When they are shot in the Soviet Union, and the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee liquidated, all you can tell us is that it is an abuse arising from the cult of the individual—and you pass on to discuss other matters."

Levy isn't satisfied with the abuse against Beria:

"If Soviet law has been re-established, are the Soviet people, and we also, to have the records of the Beria trial, and the dossier of evidence? Or was Beria tried and executed in the same summary way as he is said to have dealt with his victims?"

in the disagreements with the top 65 union leadership. The decision of whether, when and around which issue to break was made solely to be acted upon (without question or discussion) much as orders are issued to privates in the army. 'Theirs not to reason why—theirs but to do and die'—that old rhyme describing the fate of the rank and file in the military was the order of the day."

This article gives interesting clues to what life within the CP is like, clues which should lead all but the blind to ask basic questions about the nature of the CP.

"K.," the member of District 65, declares: "In my nine years in the Party I have never participated in, nor witnessed, a secret-ballot election of leaders, either to club positions or other posts of responsibility, although Article VI, Section I of the Party Constitution clearly states this as a right of membership. I have questioned many old-timers as well as new members regarding this. Invariably they express amazement that this section exists at all."

In the same issue of the *Party Voice*, Sam Coleman acknowledges the "errors" and undemocratic procedures in the activity in Local 65. He discusses an article in *Political Affairs* in June 1953 which attacked the leadership of 65 for having certain "Third Force" notions in foreign policy. Coleman argues that this was the same kind of "tragic error" made by "the German Communists when they used the slogan of Social-Fascists against Social-Democracy, and contributed toward maintaining rather than healing the split in the working-class and anti-fascist movement."

MASON DOCUMENT

Perhaps most interesting of all, this issue of the *Party Voice* contains Part I of an abridged version of a long document written by one Chic Mason (a pseudonym) in defense of Browder and Browderism. The story of this document, as revealed in the N. Y. *Post* some time ago and as virtually acknowledged by the editors of this issue of the *Party Voice*, is interesting for what it tells about what is going on within the CP.

The document was originally presented as a 20,000-word piece. The editors of the *Party Voice* had agreed to publish it, but later they began to hedge on the agreement, asking the author to cut and revise it, and the like. Mason went ahead and mimeographed the document himself, and sent it out to party leaders and others.

William Z. Foster then intervened and forbade the *Party Voice* to publish this defense of Browder. The *Party Voice* editors acknowledge this without admitting the role of Foster. They write: "There were some opinions that we should not run his article because it defended Browder's policies and ideas."

The editors of the *Party Voice* overruled Foster and decided to publish an abridged version of the document, declaring that "Our policy is that any article addressed to the problems of our party, written in good faith by a member, deserves publication. We feel strongly on this, and we are sure that the membership supports this policy, as the State Board does."

The article has been cut in a way that deletes many sections which defend Browder's full position. In a later issue of *LABOR ACTION*, we will say more about the contents of the Mason document, both in its abridged *Party Voice* version and its unabridged mimeographed version. For the moment the impor-

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