THE CRISIS CROSSES DEEPER in the AMERICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

By GEORGE POST

Despite the trials of the Old Bolsheviks, the Hitler-Stalin pact, opportunism and worse in the American trade-union movement, "Browderism" and the expulsion of Browder, the destruction of the CP's base in the trade-union movement, and the closing of the Third International's 1949-50 on "white chauvinism" charges, and the Foster-Dennis ironclad bureaucracy, the Communist Party has been able to impose a totalitarian structure upon its membership. cause they accepted the moral authority of the Stalinist state. It was only due to this that the thousand of so-called "trade-union" and radicals who moved through the CP saved up the right to democratic discussion. It is a falsification of the facts to distort the enormous number of the Soviet Union to cling to a fetish which could justify every univocal chair turn in the line as being due to the necessity of preserving "socialist legality in Russia." It could be made to appear that the demand for democratic discussion within the Party was "objectively" anti-Party.

U.S. CP HARDEST HIT

The "revolution" (revolutions which have appeared for two years) in the (socialist green) of the Twentieth Party Congress and the Congress in the Stalinist world following upon it have left the Communist Parties of the world in a permanent crisis. The CPUSA, not having the mass base of the European Communist Parties, has been the hardest hit, and will be the first to disintegrate. The signs of the disintegration increase in every meeting of the Party.

It does not take a saint to recognize that the CP was weak and sickly in comparison with its former strength even before the permanent crisis began. In the July Party Voice, the discussion bulletin of the New York Party, the New York State organizational secretary of the CP cites the following facts about the New York Party before the shock of the new anti-Party "CP organization in the country: (1) The CP lost over two-thirds of its membership. (2) Of its present membership, one-third are work- ers, one-third are students, one-third workers. The meetings even on an irregular basis, the rest being paid members. More than 20-30 per cent engage in sus- tained political activity. (3) Two-thirds of the present membership are over 40 years old "with no recruiting taking place.

Only 62 per cent of the Party paid its dues payments in the first five months of 1956. Combine this situation with the crisis of the past Twenty-First Party Congress period and the present split of the CP is crumbling. As the New York State or- ganizational secretary of the CP declared, there is "a moral crisis in the Party." A crisis not like anything we have ever en- countered in the Party's past history.

The most open discussion over held in the CP since the complete Stalinization of the Party with the appearance of clearly defined factions and sub-factions, factions which it is rare to predict will appear at the CP convention armed with mimeographed factional documents and factional programs.

In the first place, there is the Old Guard, led by William Z. Foster and based on the older party-factional, anti-comintern and anti-stalinist line. This group is in fact, a part of the old Stalinist MLF, which in recent years has been fighting for the leadership of the CP. The CP Foster can only fight back by defining Stalinist. This faction while probably not the largest of the factions, is certainly of considerable strength numerically, by clinging to the leadership of the older party members who have long-since ceased being anything but members of a cult for the adoration of Stalin's Rus- sia. Despite this numerical strength, it is not at great strength apparently within the current active membership and secondarily leadership of the CP.

In the second place, there is the "CP Progressive" which is the faction of the party in the New York Post of July 22 dubbed the "CP Right." The type of faction which is attacking the Foster leadership of the Party for having been "left-sectarianism." The CP Progressive, while not in the CP at the moment of the 1949-50, is doing a little more than peroronal kind of factionalism. The Stalinist "right" group, the cur- rent "populist" line of the Russian Party is the most offensively public apologetics for the primitive line. Dennis is at- tempting to make Foster the scapegoat for this period, in the way that Foster made Browder the fall guy for the war- time line, even though both the "right" line of Browder and the "left" line of Fos- ter were determined in Moscow. Dennis is the new leader of a Stalinist Party which has attempted to crack down upon the freewheeling discussion going on in the CP press.

A third group, a group of "Young Turks," is led by John Gates, editor of the Daily Worker, and has within it much of the secondary and local leader- ship of the CP. This group largely resided in the Young Communist League in the early Thirties. This group has demanded of the leaders of the Russian Party "a basic analysis of how such perversion of Socialist democracy, [as revealed in Khrushchov's approach], justice and in- ternationalism were permitted to devolve and continue unchecked for twenty years." They put forth and had adopted by the International Committee meeting (in June 24) a resolution which declared: "We have began to reexamine our pre- viously oversimplified and wrong concept of the relations which should exist between Marxists of various countries including the Socialist countries."

Reflecting this point of view, "Food Worker" writing in the July Party Voice declares: "I am an American Communist. I don't want to be a Russian Cossacummunist. I don't want to be an American working-class Communist." The party, he continued, was wrong more often not in the positions it took, "in great part because we thought the Russian Party was always right and had all the answers. If we had to do it all over again, we don't have to do it from there."

"The American CP, as the Soviet Congress, it seems to me, is that we must think for ourselves. We must look first, at all times, at the conditions in our country. We cannot do that unless we learn how to think for ourselves, how to think for the people with respect, and to learn from them. Without this we will not be able even to make the necessary changes in our party. We must start by listening to the ordinary members of the party.

LEADERS BLAMED

Irv Becker concluding a long analysis describes the party's origin in the Party Voice writes, "... the history of the Party contains right as well as left er- rors. These can be found in such instances as the struggle between the interlocking causes; the persistence of the Party; the lack of a critical attitude towards the will of the Party; the NYCP's lack of a critical attitude towards the will of the Party; the NYCP's lack of an understanding and application of Marxism." The Stalinist "left" group argues, made the CP the sick thing that it is. The Party Voice writer argues, and of course doing a real service and -in fact that is what is important on it were it open- ly in the face of the whole party to ad- mit that it has trained the party to be what it is; to work as it does, and as it thinks as it does; that it is responsible for the kind of cadre the party contains; and if it were to examine openly this cadre and these methods of work, and to pin- point these matters, including the pin- pointing of people. If we are to make real changes, the discussion must be taken out of the realm of generalities, and definite measures taken and worked out by the CP for the creation and growth of party democracy.

The CP concludes with an attack on any attempt to blur the differences within the Party. He writer of the memo, "... the sufferings of democratic centralism in the history of our Party, compris- ing no other issue than the problem of the Party's leadership. It is a question of the consolidation of the majority into the minority." The party panders to the party bureaucracy, this open criticism of the Russian CP, this denunciation of the anti-communist faction of the CPUSA, even though it is being led by a secondary leadership which has yet to indicate the sinewry of its protesta-