



TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

About French And Italian Communists

IN A RECENT column this reporter said he thought there was a difference in the way Italian and French Communists are striving to cope with the dilemma of Western socialism. There are certainly legitimate grounds for varied viewpoints on this matter and I'd like to explain mine.

The dilemma, as I see it, is that the French and the Italians, having won first place in leadership of the working class of their respective countries still lack support of a popular majority which is necessary to achieve working class power. The problem is pointed up by the historical fact that Marxism, born in Western Europe, has brought a triumph for socialism thus far only in Eastern Europe and Asia.

It seems to me, and this is just one man's opinion, that the Italian Communists have been the boldest and most creative in addressing themselves to the problems of Western socialism.

THIS IS SAID with due regard for the historic role the French Communists played in originating the tactics of the Peoples Front in 1934 and in organizing the national resistance against the Nazi invaders in 1940. Nor is this to say that the French Communists have been any less energetic in their search for unity with the Socialists than the Italians.

But the big development is the way Togliatti and the Italian Communists have sought to interpret and develop the theory of Marxism in a changing world. Togliatti, in his report to his party's Central Committee (June 24) in preparation for their party congress, took as his starting

point the development of Marxist-Leninist doctrine under present-day conditions.

The French Communist Party congress stressed reaffirmation of basic Marxist-Leninist theory. The Italian Communists are considering the advancement of that theory in view of changing circumstances. A key question is that of leadership in the fight for socialism. It has been the traditional view, for example, that a Marxist party seeks to win the majority of the working people and that only this Marxist Party can lead the people toward socialism.

TOGLIATTI concerned himself not only with the tactic of united front with Socialists. This the French have also done brilliantly. But Togliatti contrasted conditions today with those in Russia at the time of the revolution. Togliatti discussed a multi-party or coalition transition to socialism in which several parties may collaborate in leading the people to socialism. He also noted that there could be opposition parties outside of this socialist coalition in the advance toward socialism. Togliatti discussed the question of revising Marxist doctrine pertaining to the utilization of the existing state machinery for building socialism.

"We face a greatly different picture," Togliatti said in his report, "from that which we encountered in the past decades, and in this picture, the problem of leadership of the movements toward socialism and of the Communist movements and parties themselves, inevitably also must be viewed differently than in the past. . . ."

IF THE ITALIAN Communists merely considered unity with the Socialists a "tactic" that unity would already would have been torn asunder. It is largely because the Italian Communists have made clear their attitude toward the role of the Socialists in the advance to socialism, their positive attitude toward unity between Right-Wing and Left-wing socialists, their devotion to civil liberties and the constitution, that unity has been maintained under very difficult circumstances in Italy.

The Italian Communists have also taken the lead in correcting an old attitude regarding the Party and the trade unions. It seems as though the right wing socialist trade union will join with the left wing CGIL. But this comes after the Communists have frankly declared that the trade union must not under any conditions be dominated or controlled by any party. This, of course, means that there will be no discrimination in leadership because of political affiliation. It corrects former emphasis on the Party as a "vanguard" which leads the trade unions.

This type of initiative being taken in the theoretical, as well as tactical matters, is bound to influence the whole communist movement in Western Europe.

Daily Worker

Published daily except Saturday and Sunday by the Publishers New Press, Inc., 35 E. 12th St., New York 3, N. Y. Telephone ALanquin 4-7804.

Registered as second class matter Oct. 22, 1947, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

	3 mos.	6 mos.	1 year
Daily Worker only	\$4.00	\$7.00	\$12.00
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The Worker	\$2.00	\$3.50	