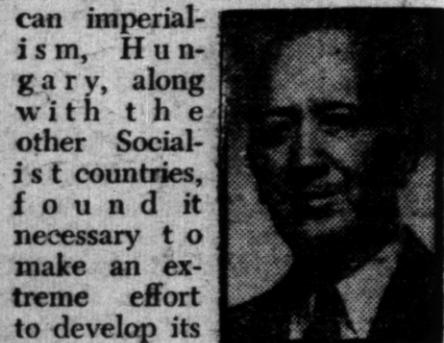


Foster Writes on the Hungarian Question

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

THE TRAGIC situation in Hungary may be considered under three general phases? The first phase was that of the Stalin-Rakosi regime, which lasted from the formation of the People's Democracy of Hungary upon the conclusion of World War II until the forced resignation this year of Premier Rakosi. This decade was one of severe privations and injustices for the Hungarian people.

Faced after 1947 with the growing threat of an atomic world war, initiated by aggressive American imperialism,



Hungary, along with the other Socialist countries, found it necessary to make an extreme effort to develop its defensive war potential. This put a very heavy strain upon the national economy, with lowered living and working standards for the masses. The difficult economic situation was gravely worsened by the bureaucratic blunders and tyranny of the Rakosi regime.

The situation was especially aggravated by the characteristic excesses and brutalities of Stalin in his later years, with his cult of the individual and great-Russian chauvinism. Consequently, the national independence of the Hungarian people was virtually liquidated; they were largely stripped of their civil liberties and subordinated to the vicious domination of the secret police;

they were subjected to needlessly severe economic strains, and the several political parties, which along with the Communists, had originally made up the people's government, were either emasculated or liquidated.

These harsh and unjust measures, alien to the principles of Socialism, could not be justified by the imperative need to arm and discipline the people in the face of the Wall Street war threat. All this gross distortion of Socialist policy, in which Rakosi was an obedient agent of Stalin, was sowing the whirlwind which was later to burst upon Hungary in full fury.

THE SECOND PHASE of the Hungarian situation may be said to have begun at the XXth Congress of the CPSU in February, 1956, when Secretary Khrushchev made his well-known exposure of Stalin's cult of the individual. There was at this time a recognition among other things, of the political injustices done to the neighboring People's Democracies and of the unnecessary economic hardships visited upon them by Stalin under cover of the needful common defense of the Socialist world against the looming threat of a dreadful atomic world war. Obviously, the spirit of the Congress signified that, in overcoming the destructive work of Stalin's cult, new and close cooperative relationships would be worked out with the People's Democracies that would ease their economic difficulties, restore their curtailed civil liberties and re-establish their national independence.

All these steps became doubly necessary with the defeat of the drive of American imperialism

for war and world conquest and the consequent easing of the international situation following the Geneva "Summit" conference of July, 1955. This situation, although it did not justify a general unilateral disarmament of the Socialist countries, nevertheless laid the basis for a substantial relaxation of the extreme economic pressure and political discipline under which the Socialist countries had been living virtually throughout the cold war years. In the meantime Stalin died in March, 1953.

A FORECAST of the new relationships to be established between the USSR and the People's Democracies was given in July, 1955, when Bulganin and Khrushchev visited Belgrade, admitted serious errors done to Yugoslavia under the Stalin regime, and restored cooperative relations with that country. This was a practical expression of the Leninist principle that countries will not find their way to Socialism by rigid pre-conceived blueprint plans, but each in its own way, in accordance with its national conditions and traditions. The successful handling of the Yugoslav affair was a triumph of Socialist diplomacy on the part of the Soviet Union, and a sense of relief went through the Socialist world that this discrediting and potentially dangerous situation had been so constructively solved.

After the Yugoslav incident it was clear to observers, Communists and others, in outside countries, that the relationship between the USSR and the People's Democracies would necessarily have to be more or less patterned, and soon, after the equalitarian terms established with Yugoslavia. It was taken

for granted generally that this would be the case. It was unthinkable to expect that the other countries of People's Democracy would continue on in the old way, with much, if not most of the deeply hated Stalin system of bureaucratic controls still in effect.

It would seem that, immediately after the agreement with Tito, a course should have been taken by the USSR, together with the People's Democracies, either individually or collectively, to liquidate the hangovers of the Stalin cult in their existing status and to establish equalitarian relationships among them more fitting to Socialist countries, based upon a mutual attraction to Socialism. Obviously, however, vigorous steps to this end were not taken. Just why this was so is not clear. To what extent this delay was because of errors in policy and inability to take the necessary steps on the part of the Soviet leaders because of inner-Party obstacles that were encountered, which defeated attempts at establishing more fraternal international relationships we have but little information.

The serious difficulties in meeting the situation must not be underestimated. What is certain, however, is that the Communist Parties of all the countries concerned, especially the Soviet Union, are being subjected to sharp criticism among the workers, Communists and others, (which sometimes takes anti-Soviet trends in the Party) for their serious failure to move promptly and decisively to solve this complex and urgent situation, particularly following the constructive XXth Congress and the encouraging agreement with Tito. The Hungarian explosion grew di-

rectly out of this failure to act promptly in the spirit of the Yugoslav settlement and the XXth Congress of the CPSU.

THE THIRD PHASE of the Hungarian situation developed immediately after the adjustment of Soviet-Polish relations during mid-1956. The latter, in itself, was a most precarious matter, full of extreme danger and marked by too rigid attitudes in the negotiations. Fortunately, however, the shift from the old to the new situation was finally accomplished without a serious rupture, and Comrade Gomulka emerged as the leader of the new regime, with a policy of rapidly developing Polish democracy and of establishing friendly and fundamentally equal working relations with the Soviet Union (a policy greatly advanced by the excellent Soviet-Polish agreement of Nov. 18). The Communist world greeted this solution of an extremely difficult and menacing situation.

In unfortunate Hungary, however, matters have not gone as smoothly as they did in Poland, rough though the latter were. They came to a violent clash which has horrified every democratic force in the world and which has done harm to the cause of world Socialism. Special reasons for this bloodbath, on top of the generally evil effects of Stalin's erstwhile tyranny, were the notoriously bureaucratic regime of Rakosi, the consequent undermining and isolation of the Hungarian Workers Party, the relative weakness of the national proletariat, the heavy concentration of the counter-revolutionary American Project X upon the country, and

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THE HUNGARIAN SITUATION

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the 20 years of fascist rule experienced by Hungary before World War II.

Without going into details of how the armed clash developed, suffice it to say that it was a world tragedy, a grave discredit to Socialism, and a summary of all previous mistakes, that the Communists in Hungary, both Soviet and Hungarian, found it necessary to conduct an armed struggle against a mass movement which undoubtedly had the backing of the bulk of the Hungarian people. The tragedy was all the more serious because the Communist forces had been in leadership in Hungary for a decade, and during this period they should have been able readily to win the unbreakable Socialist friendship and cooperation of the Hungarian people and to have destroyed the power of the always potentially dangerous reaction.

HOW THIS strange and unnatural general situation for Communists developed is however, no great mystery. Fascist-like reaction, which has always been powerful in Hungary, exploited the mistakes of the Communist parties and was able to seize upon the just grievances of the people, especially their militant demonstrative demand for national independence, and to misdirect them into reactionary and fascist channels. Fascists are past masters at such subversion, as we have seen conclusively in the days of Hitler and Mussolini.

This subversion by fascists who poured into Hungary from Austria is precisely what took place during the Hungarian insurrection of the past couple of weeks. The weakness of the Communist-led forces in the situation was that they were unable to retain the leadership of the masses and to keep the movement directed towards the achievement of legitimate people's demands, within the framework of Socialism, as had been done recently in Poland and earlier in Yugoslavia. When the leadership of the mass movement was thus seized by reactionaries, which happened under the Nagy Government, the basic issue was changed from one of a just struggle of the people for more democracy and for national independence, to an attempt by the reactionary forces, stimulated, organized, and armed by American money, to transform the Hungarian Socialist regime into one of fascism.

Even the bourgeois correspondents on the scene at the time, freely stated that the issue at stake had passed from the realm of basic reforms within the framework of Socialism to that of re-establishing the capitalist system, which, in Hungary, could only mean fascism. They freely forecast that Cardinal Mindzenty would be the head of the projected clerical fascist government.

THE REACTIONARIES of the world hailed the preliminary success of Hungarian reaction, masked as a people's revolution. They felt that at last they had the formula and the mass beginning with which to deal a mortal blow to Socialism throughout Eastern Europe and in the world in general. They obviously hoped to stimulate people's militant movements in the various People's Democracies, latch on to them, transform them into violent attacks upon Socialism, and when victorious, proceed to set up a fascist regime. And all this in preparation for a hoped-for early attack upon the Soviet Union itself.

Never in recent years have world reaction so manifestly felt that the hour had struck for a major attack against the Soviet Union as it did during the acute period of the Hungarian crisis. A serious bridle was put on their anti-Soviet plottings, however,

by the fact that their own unity had been confused and disrupted at the time by the bandit-like raid of Great Britain, France, and Israel upon Egypt.

It was in this situation, upon the request of the Kadar Hungarian government, that the Soviet Union, under the terms of the Warsaw Pact and the Potsdam agreement, stepped in to restore order in Hungary and to prevent a potentially highly dangerous victory for ultra-reaction. It was a case of supreme political necessity, such as the Soviet Union has had to face up to upon various occasions during its history, notably under Lenin's leadership.

It all goes to demonstrate that we are living in a revolutionary world and that world capitalism fighting to the last, is being replaced by world Socialism.

However deplorable and tragic the fact of the military action in Hungary, it cannot be denied that the Red Army's intervention prevented the development of a malignant danger of fascism in Eastern Europe and also the growth of a serious war menace. A realization of all this was the significance of the prompt support of the Soviet action, as unavoidable under the circumstances, by Mao Tse-tung and Togliatti, as well as by Communist parties all over the world. We cannot accept the false and dangerous theory of those who claim that under present world conditions of strengthened Socialist and democratic forces automatically, there can be no danger of war or fascism.

IN INSURRECTION-TORN Hungary the USSR and the Kadar government face grave and heavy responsibilities. The confidence of the Hungarian working class and the bulk of the people has been badly shattered and must be restored. National independence must be established and with it the fullest democracy. Every effort must be made to overcome the economic havoc caused by the fighting and to bring the country to a state of prosperity. Obviously the Red Army should be withdrawn from Hungarian soil as soon as the workers and their allies have established securities for Socialism, have set up real barriers against a fresh fascist onslaught, and as foreign troops are withdrawn from other countries. These are indeed no easy tasks, and their fulfillment will call for real Communist statesmanship—flexible, resolute, and resourceful. New state treaties will probably also have to be made with Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Albania.

The Hungarian tragedy has caused considerable uncertainty in the ranks of Communist parties in various countries, the U. S. included. Temporarily the prestige of the Soviet Union has been hurt among the masses. But all this does not signify, as some charge, a crisis in international Communism comparable to that of the Second International in 1914. The latter was the degeneration of Social Democracy; whereas this situation, for all its seriousness, is a "crisis" of growth for world Communism.

World capitalism, in general crisis, continues its process of breakdown, as graphically indicated by its grave situation over the Suez Canal; whereas, Communism readjusting itself to the changing world situation and to the hard lessons of the Stalin cult of the individual, will continue the march ahead which will finally result in the establishment of a Socialist world.

The CPUSA must grasp clearly the Hungarian situation, which it has not done so far in its statements on the question. This is why I voted against the statements of November 5th, and the current one of November 18th. I am in agreement with the general line of Comrade Dennis' letter and of Comrade Allen's article of a few days ago in the Daily Worker.