IN THE OLD GROOVE

W. Z. FOSTER V. HUNGARY'S REVOLUTION

By H. W. BENSON

Nothing is awry in the world of William Z. Foster. Where the normal socialist-minded resident of this planet sees the emprise of the Krem- lin waging war against the free world, Foster sees the mass movement of Eastern Europe fighting at different levels to free themselves from dictatorship and to establish socialist democracy, he notices no irrationality.

In the November 21 issue of the Daily Worker, for example, he discusses Hungary with this "optimistic" conclusion:

"The Hungarian tragedy has caused consid- erable uncertainty in the ranks of Communist Parties in various countries. But, as far as I am concerned, I feel that the whole situation is a crisis of world communism."

This gem of analysis would be on a par with the thought that there is only one form of parliamentary rule, or that the US is not a country.

For instance, being a Communist is to be part of a "crisis" of growth for French imperialism. That independ- ence for India came as part of a "crisis" of growing strength for the British Commonwealth. Anyone can add his own absurdities.

Ordinarily it would be a waste of time to examine Mr. Foster's views, for their twisting, illogical, incoherence is even more astounding than the pompous, confused rubbish, captured phrases, and prefabricated facts that fit neatly into the latest line devised by the Trotskyites of the USSR.

Die-Hards vs. Events

Russia, he insists, represents "socialist" de- mocracy; consequently he defends without qualification all its main moves. His art consists in an ever-changing presentation of every oscil- lation. It would be more economical to follow the line of the Kremlin directly in the speeches of its UN delegates, its resolutions and articles, than to read the same with English transliterations by Foster and his fascist friends. But times are not normal.

Even the winning of the Communist Party of the United States; there is now no doubt of it. Revolution, mass struggles, and the resurgence of socialist struggle in the Stalinist world are not without impact upon it. Whole sections of its membership and of its leadership are driven to break out of the trap of Stalinism and are growing for democratic socialism.

On the way, they come into head-on collision with the die-hard Foster. His views command attention now; not for their content, but because of the fight against them inside the CP.

In the November issue of Political Affairs, Steve Nelson, Pittsburgh CP branch, writes: "All the die-hard elements could not do better if they pitched into the discussion, suggested changes in policy, program, and structure. This would do more good than staying on the sidelines and offering advice to us to dissolve."

And he adds, "It is hoped that this discussion will not bypass them and that there will be Socialist who will enter this discussion con- structively."

Nelson leaves us unclear on where this kind of discussion is to take place; our view of the discussion from week to week will be found in the pages of LABOR ACTION.

The Smear Pattern

Foster's reconstruction of the Hungarian events, which needless to say is virtually point for point and date for date a repetition of what he has heard from his Kremlin mentors, could be summarized in these main points:

(1) Under the post-World War II regime, errors and blunders were committed leading to a rise of resentment among the Hungarian people.

(2) Khrushchev and the 20th Congress changed everything. The way was now opened for reforms that would reverse the grievous errors of the past.

(3) Regrettably, the regime in Hungary de- layed. When it failed to make a turn, the masses with their justified grievances demonstrated for it.

(4) But "fascists" took advantage of the legitimate demands of the people and turned them against the present government in a move to install another Stalinist, anti-socialist uprising, Nagy capitulated to the "fascists."

(5) To prevent Hungary from falling into the hands of reactionaries, Russian troops were compelled to intervene and save "socialism."

Russia was not merely justified; it fulfilled a role in "prolonging international democracy."

We might ask, what kind of regime was the CP in its decade of rule? A regime so barbaric and oppressive that the masses were ready to permit what you call "fascism" to take over, so long as they could get rid of it? But we need not ask that question, for Foster is notable upon one gigantic fraud and lies. It is nothing new; the whole history of Stalinism as defended and explained by Foster in years past was filled with just such lies and frame-ups. When an opponent could not be re- futed, he was called a "fascist"; if possible, executed; or, second best, murdered. Foster merely continues in old-fashioned style; it is another piece of evidence that for him nothing has changed.

In an article on page 3, we call attention to the flimsy factual basis for this new, sixty-four frame-up of a whole revolution. There we learn that "60,000 fascists" crossed the Hungarian border, some at the editor's desk of the Lon- don Daily Worker.

The prosecutors will doubtless busy them- selves as the months go by with fabricating evidence. Thus far they have dropped nothing but vociferous slanders and outright falsification.

No License from Foster?

Let us look at the CP-Rakosi regime as Foster himself describes it:

(1) "livered living and working stand- ards for the masses"; (2) was guilty of "ba- reaucratic blunders and tyranny"; (3) "exces- sives and brutalities"; (4) "great-Russian chauvinism"; (5) "the failure of the indepen- dence of the Hungarian people was virtually liquidated"; (5) "they were stripped of their civil liberties and subordinated to the vicious domination of the secret police"; (6) brought "needlessly severe economic strains"; (7) "the several political parties . . . were either emas- culated or liquidated"; (8) "these harsh and unjust measures alien to the principles of So- cialism could not be justified."

...it was against this Hungarian peoples revolted against the Stalinist democracy. And such a revolution against such an oppression we call in a vindication of the great role of the working class in foreign and domestic democracy.

The workers did not wait to be generously "liberated" from above by new CP dictators or by bourgeois imperialists; they took their fate into their own hands and for a time were victorious. Even in defeat they have given an enormous impulse to the world struggle for de- mocracy and socialism.

But they had to do this without Mr. Foster's kind of permission. In his view, they should have waited reforms from above through the ruling CP. Meanwhile, he gives them a permit to have "justified grievances and a duty to be in the line of putting an official stamp of approval upon their first peaceful demonstrations for reform. The party and Hungary, he tells us, regretfully was di- volatory and the "explosion" derived from its failure to act soon enough. Presumably, the people should have waited patiently.

In Poland, Foster feels, things worked out far more felicitously:

"Fortunately, however, the shift from the old to the new situation was finally accomplished [in Poland] without a struggle. Comrade Gomulka emerged as the leader of a new regime with a policy of rapidly developing Polish Democracy and of establishing friendly relations with the Soviet Union."

Definition of "Fascism"

One cannot help but wonder what Foster's reaction would have been had Russian troops deposed Gomulka. Doubtless, he would have discovered that Gomulka too had been a tool of fascism.

Mr. Foster's office, you see, issues permits which are carefully circumscribed; the people are permitted to protest, a political crime is tolerable to the Russian bureaucracy. They must still obey postponement from above; they may not be satisfied. This is what Mr. Foster meant by the rule of the Communist Party, reworked and refresh- lened as it sees fit in its good time.

They may, in sun, go as far as Poland but no further. If they do so it is for the Russian command and so it must be. Anything more is "fascism."

For the sake of argument, let us take this, just for a moment. In Poland there now exists a govern- ment which is "socialist" by permission of Mr. Foster. So far, its actions have the official stamp. But Russian troops are behind it. Do you have the Polish people the right to de- mand their repeal? Should the government insist on leaving their Polish soil? At any rate, if the people do not want Russian armies on their territory, have they the right to demon- strate and to fight for their departure?

Foster doesn't say directly but it is clear that such actions are beyond what his "socialist" patent allows.

They Fought for Freedom

But let us leave Russian troops in Poland. Mr. Foster frowns upon the Rakosi regime and other "socialist" states. If there is no indication that the Gomulka govern- ment will permit really free elections. It has not permitted the reconstruction of free political par- ties; and we refer not to parties which are manufactured to support the government but genuinely free parties, free to oppose it.

Have the Polish people the right to demon- strate for free elections and for free political parties? And if the government refuses to grant such demands, have they the right to oppose it?

Mr. Foster doesn't bother with such matters because his license doesn't cover such grants. That is, in his view, nothing to do with real freedom and it therefore had to be smashed by anti- socialist dictators.

That's what happened in the Hungarian Revolution. Socialist-minded workers rejected the promises of their oppressive rulers; they did not trust the promises of dictators and they would not take power into their own hands. Socialist revolution was crushed solely by the power of Russian armies.

All the lies and frame-ups are calculated to hide this basic truth, that they will not succeed,