

**Third Phase in the CP Discussion:**

**Foster Attacks, Gates Group Retreats**

By H. W. BENSON

The discussion in the Communist Party since the 20th Congress has already gone through three phases, each of which illuminates the nature of one of the conflicting tendencies.

*First:* there was the immediate aftermath of the Khrushchev revelations. This could be called the "Dennis period."

The CP was preoccupied with the vexing job of covering up its inner degradation. The "crimes of Stalin" were to be recognized quickly and superficially. The party was to go on as before after admitting a whole series of past "errors" which were to be replaced by brand-new correct tactics including an appeal for a "united front" of all progressives. This culminated in the "Draft Program" now under discussion.

**It is clear now that the Dennis line and the Draft Program covered at least two hostile tendencies. The Dennis wing was ready to pass lightly over the Khrushchev line and was quickly satisfied with the pitiful "Marxist" explanation from the Kremlin because it intended no fundamental change in its subservience to Russia.**

*Second:* came the Poznan uprising, the Warsaw crisis, and finally the Hungarian revolution. This could be called the "Daily Worker-Gates" period.

Under the impact of workers' revolution, a section of the party and its leadership which had presumably been united behind the Draft Program began to go further. The *Daily Worker* criticized Russian intervention in Hungary and sided with Gomulka in Poland. The discussion centered now, not around the draft program, but around the *Daily Worker's* attitude toward Russia and toward the Hungarian events.

The Gates tendency, it became clear, was beginning to shake itself loose from the tutelage of the Kremlin and was taking the first hesitant steps toward demo-

cratic socialism while, ironically enough, still calling Russia a "socialist" state.

*Third:* Russian troops and tanks entered Budapest for the second time, overthrew the Nagy regime and set up a simple puppet government headed by Kadar. This became the "Foster period" and continues to this day.

**FOSTER HAMMERS AWAY**

It was a clear case: which side of the barricades are you on? The Draft Program and the Dennis line had opened the floodlights of criticism; whole sections of the party were ranging themselves on the side of the Hungarian revolution and against Russian intervention. Foster demanded that the party draw back.

He pointed out that it was being undermined by the course of the discussion and insisted upon a return to "Marxism-Leninism" and to "proletarian internationalism," by which he meant subservience to Russia. Dennis and the whole cadre of old-line party officials hastened to rally around Foster and together with him heaped abuse and slander upon the Hungarian revolution, using every pre-fabricated lie supplied by the Kremlin.

**It is under this pressure that the party discussion continues today and the effects of the hammering-away by the Foster neo-Stalinists is already evident.**

Thus it came about that the discussion, which really pitted the spokesmen of bureaucratic dictatorship against those who want to break from it, was posed in

this false light: Dogmatism versus creative Marxism (as the Gates tendency puts it), or "Marxism-Leninism" versus "liquidationism" (as Foster puts it).

On December 2, the *Worker* editorializes on "America and Hungary" commenting:

"Of course, the issue isn't the same in those two countries. [Egypt and Hungary.] Foreign troops—British, French and Israeli—are in Egypt as a result of one of the most brazen acts of aggression in the long sordid history of imperialism. Foreign troops—those of the Soviet Union—are in Hungary by agreement between the two countries under the Warsaw Pact, counterpart of NATO, as well as under the Potsdam Agreement; Hungary was part of the fascist Axis."

**We skip discussion of the inner content of this monstrosity; it suffices here to point out that this editorial represents a further capitulation by the *Daily Worker* to the pressure of Foster and his allies.**

**D. W. YIELDS**

This editorial is a direct repudiation of the line adopted by the National Committee on November 4 under the impact not of Foster but of the rising workers of Budapest. This is what the *Daily Worker* printed then:

"The response of the Soviet authorities to the request for armed intervention also cannot be justified by the argument that they had the legal right to do so under the Warsaw Pact. This was not a matter of formal rights. It violated the essence of the Leninist concept of national self-determination because the call for the troops was not in accord with the wishes of the Hungarian people."

In one month, the *Daily Worker* swung from repudiation of the "Warsaw Pact" argument to apology for it.

**Behind it all is the preparation by the Fosterites to cut the throats of their**

critics, figuratively speaking of course. In a speech on November 11, probably at an inner-party discussion meeting, Foster set the tone for the opening of a bitter campaign against the Gates tendency.

The political content of his remarks is of little independent consequence; once we realize that Foster is eager to proceed without making any basic changes we know all we have to know about his fundamental line. What is significant are the hostile overtones.

"The central issue in our own party," says Foster, "is whether or not we shall continue to build the Communist Party. Comrade Gates raises this basic question sharply in the November issue of *Political Affairs* by calling for the transformation of the Communist Party into a so-called political-action organization. . . . The proposed new organization is a threat against the life of the Communist Party. . . ."

Foster goes on to speak of "this reckless campaign of wildly exaggerating the party's errors." He warns: "One of the main manifestations of this trend is the development in the recent period of definitely anti-Soviet trends in their ranks."

He goes on to characterize the Gatesites further as a "strong right tendency," and accuses it later of "persistent sniping at the USSR and its leaders, which went so far in the Hungarian crisis as to denounce the latter as enemies of Socialism, both within and without the Soviet Union." This tendency, he concludes, "is now threatening the life of our party."

Foster, then, is ready for a fight. The *Daily Worker* yields before his attack.

**Gates and his friends have raised the banner of independence from the Kremlin, so far in mild but unmistakable fashion. Independence is no abstraction. In the concrete conditions of the fight inside the CP, independence means the rejection of every hint of capitulation to Foster.**

**Shachtman Tilts with D.W. Editor — —**

(Continued from page 1)

opponent under heavy fire from Foster and Dennis, and he often seemed to be picking his way carefully in order not to give ammunition to his inner-party opponents, while at the same time he stressed that side of the CP's views which was most congenial to him.

An example of this occurred at the very beginning of his presentation, which started by quoting the Nov. 4 *Daily Worker* editorial on Hungary. This was the one, written before the second intervention, in which the use of Russian troops was clearly criticized. He then added, "That is what I believe."

However, he did not mention that after the second intervention and with his support, a new statement adopted refrained from taking a position on the Russians' role and put much stress on the talk about "fascists" in Hungary. He thus left the impression that the Nov. 4 editorial still represented the CP position on the current situation.

He continued: "Others in the Communist Party do not fully share my views. There is disagreement on whether the fascist danger was serious enough to justify the second intervention; and this is now being discussed. While there are differences on this one aspect, we agree on . . ." and from this point on, he proceeded to give his version of the party line. He did not again mention the "fascist danger" in Hungary, nor did he ever give the now-official view on it.

The three things "we agree on" were: (1) The "tragic clash" was the "result of serious mistakes by the Soviet Union and the former Hungarian leaders." (2) Powerful reactionary forces in the U. S. and Hungary tried to "use" the occasion for their own ends. (3) A program for "a way out." Under the head of this "program" he sloganized for "a new summit conference" to end the cold war; simultaneous withdrawal of troops by both West and East from foreign countries; dissolution of all military blocs,

including both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

This, he said, "will facilitate the democratization of the socialist countries, which is the irreversible process now under way."

**THIRD CAMP AND DEMOCRACY**

Max Shachtman's close-packed 10 minutes covered both the Middle East and the upsurge against Stalinism in East Europe, presenting a Third Camp position of opposition to both imperialist aggressions. The "brutal and chauvinistic assault" on Egypt, he said, has failed because the former colonial subjects of imperialism cannot be dominated by force any more. "We Independent Socialists are unreservedly on the side of Egypt's resistance" to this attack.

But the brutal assault on Hungary, he stressed, is "conducted by a foreign imperialist regime which perpetrates its infamy in the name of socialism," and this makes the Russians' massacre especially odious and disastrous. Those who justify it as "necessary" only "reveal how their ideas about socialism have been warped, deformed and corroded. . . ." The supreme infamy indeed is that the Stalinist assassins slander the Hungarian martyrs as fighting to restore "fascism."

"All the talk of 'different roads to socialism' means nothing," he said, "unless it is commonly agreed that the road to socialism leads through democracy and an ever-greater expansion of democracy. . . . Socialism and democracy are not two different entities which can be added or separated as you feel like doing it. . . ."

American workers, he said, rightly despise Stalinism and the Russian system, and will have nothing to do with those who defend them. "There is much talk nowadays about reconstituting and reuniting the American socialist movement on sounder and stronger foundations. I am emphatically for it." But no socialist movement can get anywhere unless it clearly comes out against any

notion that the road to socialism leads through any system of political suppression of opposition, and for the view that proclaims democratic rights for all, in this country and Russia both.

The battle in Hungary, he concluded, poses the question: Which side are you on?

Dave Dellinger, second pacifist on the panel, emphasized that "the lesson of Hungary" is that "the spirit of man demands total freedom." The revolutions of our time are "at dead end," both the Russian Revolution and "the American Revolution with its ideals in the Declaration of Independence." We all must re-examine our assumptions, he reiterated (but did not indicate just how he was "re-examining" his own pacifist assumptions).

This was followed by something of a blast at American trade unions which "now have become a second set of bosses over the American people."

He could describe his own prison experience as a C.O. either as a "horror story" or a "country club idyll," he said; similar approaches can also be taken to Russia and the Communist system; the truth includes both: this was his last if somewhat inconclusive point.

**CHALLENGE ON RUSSIA**

This ended the presentations. Around the table, the panelists directed questions at each other. First of all, Swomley challenged Shachtman on pacifism, and Shachtman explained the socialist attitude on violence and non-violence.

Chipping into this discussion, Gates took occasion to veer off into how grateful we should all be to the Soviet Union for helping to defeat Hitler. "So we must consider this when we ask why a socialist country did what it did in Hungary. It was wrong. . . a setback to socialism" but they are not just devils; they thought they were acting in the best interests of socialism, though they were mistaken. . . .

Shachtman launched a question at Gates and Sweezy: How do you explain

the social reasons for this Russian policy of imposing its "socialism" by force?

Sweezy, replying first, intensified the manner in which he had also made his extemporaneous presentation, to a point which rather amazed this reporter, who has not heard him on the platform before. He often seemed to be trying to sound like a cracker-barrel Will Rogers suspicious of the fast-talking city-slickers. Although he was aided by a natural New England twang and pieced it out with a folksy vocabulary, it did not quite sit right on this ex-Harvard professor who specializes in the more abstruse reaches of Marxist economics.

At any rate, his reply to the question went: "I don't know the answers to all these questions" (applause from a number of other folksy-type intellectuals in the audience). . . . "Things aren't quite so simple. . . . We ought to try to understand, not denounce or demand. . . . Consider how complex problems are. . . . You know, things aren't so simple. . . ." but he did refer back to his explanation about the backwardness of Russia.

**"WILL OF THE PEOPLE"**

Gates tackled the question in his own way: He was against the imposition of socialism by Russia on another country, but in Russia, he asserted, socialism was not imposed by force. He then proceeded to substitute the question of the "genuine popular character" of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Shachtman caught this up and drove the question home again; picking up a reference to the "will of people," he wanted to know (from Gates and Sweezy) how they proposed to determine the "will of the people" under the Stalinist system where there are no institutions of political democracy.

Sweezy answered in what was becoming his characteristic know-nothing vein for the evening: "This question has been discussed by political scientists since Rousseau and we won't solve it to-

(Turn to last page)