

Is This the Last Round?

The Fight in the Communist Party

By GORDON HASKELL

The fight in the American Communist Party which was not resolved at their convention a year ago has broken to the surface again. And from all indications, one may speculate that it is surfacing for the last time. Once this round is over, it hardly seems there will be enough people left in the party to work up a good fight among themselves, though the history of the political sects in America should give one pause in making any such prediction. But if the signs are read right in this corner, the outcome of this fight will be to leave the American Communist Party nothing but a shrunken, isolated and insignificant Stalinist sect.

CENTRAL STRUGGLE

The issue around which the factions are rallying in the party today is the declaration of the ruling parties of the Communist-run countries issued in Moscow last fall. But the central struggle in which this is but an episodic moment is still the one which raged in the CP before the last convention: between those who want to find a new road by which they can make a contribution to the regroupment and re-orientation of socialism in America, and those who continue to view the American CP essentially as a border guard of the Communist regime in Russia.

When the Moscow Declaration became public, it was immediately clear that this represented a new departure (even though an old direction) for the Russian rulers, a departure in the direction of tightening the screws on the world Communist movement once again. Obviously, the American party could not stand aside in a stance of neutrality to such a development. It was designed precisely, among other things, to give the Kremlin loyalists all over the world the encouragement and backing in settling their accounts, once and for all, with those elements in the world Communist movement who have been showing marked signs of restlessness and independence since the Khrushchev "revelations" about Stalin and the Hungarian revolution. William Z. Foster and his friends in the American party were not the last to read the signs and hear the call.

FOSTER LASHES OUT

In the December issue of *Political Affairs*, Foster lashed out in an article entitled "The Party Crisis and the Way Out." The crux of the article is to accuse Gates and his tendency of "Right Revisionism" which is described as "the most serious political error" experienced by the Party "in its entire history." That is saying a mouthful, but there is a good deal more.

In concluding the first section of the article (the second section "The Road Ahead" is announced for the January issue which was not out when LABOR ACTION went to press), Foster states that although the last convention "gave a strong political set-back to Right Revisionism; nevertheless the Right has remained entrenched organizationally throughout the Party. Together with its conciliators it is now strong in all the leading committees of the Party, and this is also true in various state committees. Its main strength is that it controls and uses the *Daily Worker* as its special mouthpiece."

Following Foster's blast in *Political Affairs*, the Fosterites in the party began a campaign against Gates which occupied a good deal of attention in the latter columns of the *Daily Worker*. It seems that in answering a question at a meeting in Boston, Gates had said that as an American he would take pride if the United States took the lead in suspending nuclear bomb tests, and as a Communist he would feel the same way if Russia were to take the lead.

"HYPHENATED PERSONS"

Despite the fact that this appears to have been said in the context of a speech which put the chief blame for the cold war on the United States, and which had as its purpose to push the CP line on "peaceful co-existence," the old-line Stalinist pack was soon baying at his heels. He was accused of "equating" the role of Russia and of the United States in the cold war; "he created the impression that American Communists are hyphenated persons and have divided loyalties," (Wm. Weinstone), and who knows what all else.

The replies to these attacks were, as has been customary with the Gatesites from the beginning, muffled, ambiguous, conciliatory. It would seem that the silent, or not so silent, departure of several thousand supporters from the party during the past year has not succeeded in convincing them of the futility of their moderate course. Or is it really that their restraint is a result more of divided souls and unclear perspectives than of a conscious decision on how they should carry on their fight?

At any event, their mildness has availed them little. An article appeared in the December 26 issue of the *New York Times* to the effect that a meeting of the National Executive Committee of the party had decided to give up the *Daily Worker* because of the financial crisis of the paper, and in the hope of saving *The Worker*, their weekend edition.

In the context of the article, the

Times reporter wrote that he had checked the story with editor John Gates, who had told him: "In the thirty-four-year history of the *Daily Worker* there have been many predictions of its death, but it has proved to have more lives than the proverbial cat. I am opposed to the suspension of the *Daily Worker* and intend to fight for its continued existence. In any case, the *Daily Worker* will cease to exist only when it alone says so."

GATES CENSURED

On December 29th, the *Sunday Worker* carried a statement by the National Administrative Committee (the body set up at its last convention to run the party) explaining that the final decision on the life of the *Daily Worker* was up to the full National Committee, and concluding: "In view of these facts the NAC declares that the press interview of John Gates on this matter was completely unauthorized, and that such public statements on the part of any individual constitute a violation of the most elementary organizational principles common to all working class organizations."

The following day, the *DW* carried a letter signed by seven of its top writers and editors (Abner Berry, Jesus Colon, Max Gordon, Ben Levine, Alan Max, David Platt, and Lester Rodney) taking exception to the NAC statement, and defending Gates. And the issue of December 31 finally carried a press release on the meeting of the Executive Committee which had decided to suspend the paper.

It appears that this meeting of the Executive Committee was pretty important, and if one can judge from the diplomatic communique, a heated one. First, there was the decision to suspend the *DW*. Then "The NEC received a report by Eugene Dennis on some aspects of the work of the CPUSA since its 16th national convention on the internal party situation, and the tasks

ahead. It also heard a conflicting report by Sid Stein on the same subject matter." Since no decision could be reached, the matter was referred to the next meeting.

Then there was a report by Robert Thompson on the Moscow Declaration. A statement to be published in the January issue of *Political Affairs* was voted 11 to 7, with 2 abstaining and 2 absent. Since Gates voted with the majority, the statement can be awaited with some real interest.

NAC CENSURED

By a similar vote the National Executive Committee voted to condemn a letter to the National Committee issued by the National Administrative Committee on the Moscow Declaration early in December. It seems that the letter was issued by a vote of four to three, with Dennis one of the four and Gates one of the three and the NEC told the NAC to "function within the limits of its clearly defined administrative role" in the future.

All this may become confusing, if not even tedious to the outsider. But the fact emerges crystal-clear that the fight inside the CP is raging again, and in the context of the world situation, it is not likely that it will end without a major blow-up in the party.

With the Moscow Declaration, what should really have been understood by every knowledgeable person, became impossible to misunderstand. The Russian leadership demands unconditional loyalty from the leadership of every Communist Party in the world, as it did for so many years. Any party which refuses to give it, and wholeheartedly at that, will be reorganized or destroyed, or both. That has happened to more than one Communist Party in the past.

A pro-Communist political movement which refuses to give such unconditional and uncritical loyalty and obedience may continue to exist for a while, but to do so it must find independent roots in its own country, and that is extremely difficult once its ties to Russia have been cut. That may be possible for a Stalinoid publication or two, even for an association of some breadth and durability. But a mass Communist Party independent or critical of Russia has never existed anywhere except in Yugoslavia where the party had state power before it broke loose.

Preventive War Drift — —

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bombs and missiles, and deep holes in the ground? Gaither and Rockefeller reports say yes.

ARMAMENT RACE

Great stress is laid on the fact of Russian industrial and scientific achievement and that in a few years it will probably be on an equal level in over-all military capability. The conclusion drawn from this is that every muscle must be strained to keep the present American superiority. But there is serious question whether this can be done except through an armament race which will dwarf the present efforts, since no one expects the Russians to sit by and do nothing.

The consequences of this Canute-like effort are pointed to by Walter Lippmann as the basic cause of the decay of U. S. foreign policy.

"The decay of our foreign policy is due to the inability of those who make it to recognize or to accept the fundamental fact that the U. S. is not the paramount but only an equal power. Yet in the Far East, in the Middle East, and in Germany, the official aims of our policy are those of a paramount power. These aims can be achieved only by the unconditional surrender of China and of Russia.

"This underlying contradiction is the basic cause of the decay of our foreign policy, and, incidentally, it is the basic cause of the fabulous unpopularity of Secretary Dulles. We are struggling stubbornly for results that we cannot hope to achieve, and this impetus, especially when it is covered with moral preachments, is alienating the people we are trying to lead."

If the only answer to the growing in-

dustrial power of the Stalinist world is to build more missiles, to dig deep holes in the ground, more conventional armaments or to unify the armed services in the interest of greater efficiency, then all is lost. War then becomes an absolute necessity at some point since there is no absolute guarantee that at some point Russian military power will not equal, if not surpass that of capitalist America.

PREVENTIVE WAR?

This point has not been lost to the authors of the Gaither Report, and it is even a strain in the Rockefeller Report in spite of a formal disclaimer of the idea. The conclusion that some members of the Gaither committee have come to or raised is preventative war. There is no definite evidence that the Gaither Report contains such a recommendation. But as the *N. Y. Post* has pointed out editorially, it is a grim state of affairs when many people in Washington are prepared to believe that such a recommendation is possible and could logically flow from the Report.

But whether or not it is informally in the Gaither Report, there have been a number of newspaper reports that leading members of the committee have been thinking along these lines.

Drew Pearson in his column on December 17 reported that Assistant Secretary of Defense Mansfield Sprague fought for the point of view that since the first attack in a nuclear war would be so massive "that if war appears inevitable some time in the future, it would be disastrous for us to wait until the Kremlin strikes the first blow."

But even more authoritative is the re-

port by Arthur Krock in the *N. Y. Times* of December 20 of a speech made to an Army committee by William C. Foster, of the Olin-Mathieson Chemical Corp., former head to the ECA under the Truman administration, and a leading member of the Gaither committee.

"MOST IMPORTANT"

Foster's statement that "we must attempt to get away from the strange dichotomy with which we have traditionally viewed force, refusing to consider it except as a last resort," was interpreted by Krock as implying a preventative war and "by deduction to have been the most important recommendation to the President and the National Security Council."

In addition William Shannon in the *N. Y. Post* of December 31 reports that "there have been other stories [of preventative war sentiment] to the effect that some of the members of the Gaither committee, at a private dinner on the evening of Dec. 9 which was attended by Vice President Nixon, put forward conjecturally the possibility of preventative war."

There have been public denials of any such conjectures, and the official public views of those involved do not embody these ideas. However, there can be little doubt, in view of the varied reports, that preventative war ideas have been discussed. It is the direct implication in much of the present thinking about foreign policy in Washington. Every step taken is the logical extension of the assumptions, but it is the logic of madness. The assumption that the only alternatives are continuation of the present policy or surrender and appeasement is false.