

# Communist Militants: Which Side Are You On?

By **GORDON HASKELL**

Russian tanks, in crushing the revolution in Hungary, have also dealt a mortal blow to the world Communist Parties from which they will never recover. The shells exploding in Budapest have blown up the last myth with which this movement was trying to paste itself together: the myth that "Stalinism without Stalin" was in fact, or was in the process of becoming, democratic socialism.

Ever since the world leaders of the Communist movement "revealed" that Russia, the "socialist bastion," had lived under a brutal totalitarian regime for twenty years, this movement in the United States and throughout the world has been in a process of ideological turmoil and disintegration.

Thousands of members and leaders who had lived, fought and sacrificed for this movement because they believed it offered an infinitely more democratic, more humanitarian method of social organization than that which prevails in the capitalist world, began to re-think what they had been taught, and what they had taught others, about the rela-

tionship between socialism and democracy.

As is to be expected, individuals and groups in and around the Communist Party have differed in the speed and depth with which they were willing or able to re-assess their political ideology. As the further implications of the "revelations" about Stalinism presented themselves, some began to hesitate, and others to draw back. The discussion in the American CP (and in most others) swung away from the central question of the social character of the Russian regime and of the others built in its **gory.** **the statement adopted by the CP** as the correctness of the domestic policies of the leadership during the past

few years, the reasons for the isolation of the movement, and the like.

But the events in Poland and Hungary of the past few weeks confront every member and sympathizer of the American Communist movement with problems and questions which cannot and will not be denied.

**This was illustrated as clearly as it could be in the Daily Worker editorial on October 30 "Popular Upheaval in Hungary," the statement adopted by the CP national committee on November 1, and in the editorial following the crushing of the Hungarian revolution which appeared in the issue for November 5.**

"Our own analysis," says the national committee statement, "is that the great upheavals in Poland and Hungary were initially and primarily mass democratic upsurges of the working class and peo-

**NEXT WEEK IN L. A.**

**The Election Results  
and Labor's Course**

ples of these countries for democratization, for a solution to their economic problems, for full national sovereignty and equality in their relations with the Soviet Union."

"This is so despite the fact that in Poland and, more successfully in Hungary, reactionary forces and others influenced by agents and propaganda of capitalist countries including our own, have been trying to use these democratic movements for the purpose of restoring capitalism in these lands.

"Nevertheless, the basic cause of these upheavals is to be found in the fact that the Communist parties of these countries mechanically followed the experiences of the Soviet Union . . . as well as the wrong policies pursued by the Stalin regime towards these countries.

"These wrong policies aggravated by the stringencies of the cold war led to the deterioration of economic conditions . . . to the imposition of bureaucratic rule, the violation of Socialist Democracy, the jailing and even execution of leaders of the people including leading

*(Continued on page 7)*

# To Communist Militants — —

(Continued from page 1)

Communists. They resulted in denying participation in the political life of the countries to parties and personalities that represented large sections of the population. They resulted in infringements upon the sovereignty and independence of these nations.

"Such policies cannot be defended by those who want to see a better and more democratic way of life in the world."

The statement then condemns the Hungarian Communist Party particularly for calling in Russian troops to put down the movement, hails the Russian statement of October 31 "on the relations between socialist countries" as representing a real implementation of the "decisions of the 20th Congress," and finally calls for a withdrawal of all foreign troops from European soil.

## SIGN OF CONFLICT

This statement is to be welcomed by democratic socialists as a reflection of healthy changes in the thinking of numerous Communist militants and sympathizers, perhaps even some leading people—changes which started with the 20th Congress "revelations" about the nature of the Stalinist regime and have been given a further push by the recent events in Poland and Hungary. It signals an irrepressible conflict inside the American Communist Party between those who will want to continue to hang on to Russian Stalinism as the ideological and physical base of their movement, and those who seek to move forward to a truly independent, democratic socialist movement.

The statement of the CP committee on the Polish and Hungarian events reflects this conflict; it does not consummate it, even though two leading members of the committee abstained on the statement. For far as the statement goes from the Stalinist position of two years ago, it is evident throughout that the authors are still trying to straddle two horses which are moving rapidly in opposite directions.

While the statement points to the past crimes of Stalinism, and charges that the Russian leadership has yet to "fully apply" the promises of the 20th Congress, it is still framed in terms appropriate

to regretful supporters and sorrowfully friendly would-be reformers of an essentially worthy regime. Witness the welcome it gives to the Russian declaration of October 31, which events have demonstrated was merely a military ruse to induce the Hungarian people to lower their guard while Russian troops were pouring into the country to crush them.

The statement of the CP national committee was written *before* the reinforced Russian troops drowned the Hungarian revolution in blood. But the *Daily Worker* editorial of November 5, *after* this event, speaks in the same regretful tones.

"The use of Soviet troops in Hungary will bring no lasting solution to that country's problems," says the editorial. That is why we support the Hungarian masses who sought to solve their own problems as they were settled in Poland without violence, without foreign troop intervention and without allowing supporters of the old fascist regime to remain in power."

The section of the CP leadership which is running the *Daily Worker* is still straddling an impossible contradiction. They "support the Hungarian masses," but they do not condemn those who have been shooting them down in the streets of Budapest.

They are in a position like that of a French socialist who might write that he "supports the Algerian masses," without being willing to say that he opposes the imperialist rape of their countries by French troops.

## LET'S NOT STRADDLE

One can get away with such phrasemongering in an editorial as long as one does not have to propose a *policy*. Then the question arises inevitably: which side are you for, and which side against?

The use of Poland as the example of the *right* way to "democratize" a Stalinist regime, as against the "wrong" Hungarian way, serves the same purpose. The fact of the matter is that in Poland the revolution was halted before it really got under way. There is absolutely no guarantee that there will be multi-party

elections and freedom of speech and press in Poland; quite the contrary. There is absolutely no guarantees that the Russian troops will leave Poland; quite the contrary.

The Hungarian events have underlined what is in store for the Stalinist regime in any country where the people really get a chance to break out of its repressive control, and Gomulka and his colleagues have noted it. Even more clearly, the Russians have sought to teach all the peoples of Eastern Europe what will happen to them should they seek to establish real independence. In the circumstances it would appear that this lesson was meant at least as much for the Poles as for the Hungarians.

It would be pointless to go through every sentence in the statements now being issued by the CP leadership with a view to pointing out their various inadequacies. Their attempt to straddle between ideological loyalty to the Russian regime *which remains Stalinist in all essentials*, and support to the struggle for democracy of the victims of this regime cannot long continue.

Men like William Z. Foster recognize clearly that to break with support of Russia, no matter what crimes are committed by its rulers, means the end of the world Communist movement as it has developed over the years. CP militants who want to move in the direction of democratic socialism no doubt sense this too, and this is one of the reasons for tortured attempts to reconcile what is irreconcilable.

The Hungarian people, led by the working class, have paid a terrible price for their heroic attempt to break out of the grip of Stalinism at home and out of the Stalinist empire. Their triumph, short-lived as it was, will be remembered with the Paris Commune as one of those events in which history casts its shadow before. Not the least among their achievements is this: they posed to every member or sympathizer of the world Communist movement who has an ounce of revolutionary democratic socialism in him the question which has to be answered:

Which side are you on?