

The Crisis in the European and American CP's

By Morris Stein

The world crisis of Stalinism has assumed varying forms in the Communist parties of the capitalist countries. The Communist parties of France, Italy and the United States typify three distinct variants as to the intensity of the crisis and the form it has taken.

Of the three, the French Communist Party remains the least affected. Its four-day congress, concluded July 21 at Le Havre, differed little from previous congresses. The proceedings revolved around the report by the party's general secretary Maurice Thorez, who until the cult of the individual fell into disrepute, was hailed in the CP as the "French Stalin."

The cult of the individual was, of course, dutifully condemned by Thorez. His target, however, was not the cult, but those who tried to probe into its origin and social roots. "It would be an idealistic deformation of history," he said, "to attribute to an individual no matter how eminent, the unbelievable power to modify by himself the social regime. As to the affirmation that the cult of the individual flows from Soviet system, from the allegedly anti-democratic character of the system itself, this is contrary to all the facts."

With this airy generalization Thorez dismisses the 30-year Stalinist perversion of the Soviet system and shuts off any line of discussion that investigates this development.

Thorez' remarks were in no way intended as a contribution to the discussion on the origin and nature of Stalinism. It was meant as an order to end all discussion. And this is what the

Congress delegates took it to mean. Not a single speaker dared question or refute Thorez. His report was approved by the customary unanimous vote. To further emphasize strict adherence to Stalinist monolithism the outgoing members of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau were re-elected en-bloc.

As for France itself, Thorez saw no sign of the cult of the individual. One speaker, Ooghe, secretary of the Pas-de-Calais federation, did detect the danger of the cult of the individual in France. But the danger had been surmounted, he said, when August Lecoeur, one of the party's secretaries was expelled some time ago. It was Lecoeur, according to Ooghe who tried to build a cult around himself.

To make sure that the danger of Lecoeurism is not revived, the CP bureaucrats organized a goon squad to break up a public meeting at Henin-Lietard, where Lecoeur was scheduled to speak shortly before the CP congress. Lecoeur himself was badly beaten up.

The Thorez line, represents the determination of the Kremlin to contain the crisis of Stalinism and prevent it from becoming a crisis that will endanger the very power and privileges of the bureaucratic caste. Thorez himself, by his mode of living—a private villa in the aristocratic Cannes resort, with costly chauffeur-driven automobiles at his disposal—is flesh of the flesh of the Soviet bureaucrats. His line is the Kremlin's line. This is shown by the recent statement of the Central Committee of the CP of the Soviet Union.

To strengthen Thorez' hand against the rank and file in the

French party, the Kremlin bureaucracy sent a delegation to the Congress for the first time. It was headed by Suslov, a member of the secretariat of the CP of the Soviet Union, who took pains to refer to Thorez as "a very dear friend."

In contrast to the treatment given Thorez, Togliatti, general secretary of the Italian Communist Party, was openly reprimanded in the resolution of the Central Committee of the CP of the Soviet Union adopted June 30.

An Italian periodical, Nuovi-Argomenti, June 16th; quoted Togliatti as follows: "Soviet Democratic life was limited, partly suffocated, by the ascendancy of a bureaucratic and authoritarian method of leadership, and by violations of the legality of the regime."

In this statement Togliatti is at odds with Thorez not only on the "facts" about the internal regime in the Soviet Union but also on what constitutes an "idealistic distortion of history."

Togliatti says categorically: "As long as we confine ourselves, in substance, to denouncing the personal faults of Stalin as the cause of everything we remain within the realm of the 'personality cult.' . . . The true problems are evaded, which are why and how Soviet society could reach and did reach certain forms alien to the democratic way and to the legality which it had set for itself, even to the point of degeneration."

After the CPSU issued its resolution Togliatti, just as every other top Stalinist functionary, was compelled to fall into line. Even then, however, he tried to uphold his point of view, if only by implication. "In my opinion,

and I have said so openly, the line followed by the Soviet comrades in the construction of a Communist society was undoubtedly right," said Togliatti; "but within the general framework of this acknowledgement, there may be differing opinions on the value and importance of the errors committed under Stalin's leadership, the violations of legality, the restrictions on democracy, and so on, over the economic and political development of the Soviet Union."

As can be seen, Togliatti beat a considerable retreat from his earlier declarations, without, however, going as far in support of the CPSU resolution as Thorez.

It has become common knowledge that within the leadership of the American Communist Party there are three distinct tendencies. There has been no report made to the membership about the differences, but the division is readily discernible from a reading of statements appearing in the Daily Worker.

There is the viewpoint of William Z. Foster, which is equivalent to the Thorez position. Last April at the time of his first pronouncements on the Stalin cult following the 20th Congress, Foster kept emphasizing Stalin's contributions and minimizing even those crimes of the Stalin dictatorship that Khrushchev had revealed. In one of his articles, Foster described Stalin's monstrous crimes as merely "incorrect methods of work."

The editors of the Daily Worker, on the other hand, have taken a stand similar to that of Togliatti's. They have been far more critical than Foster of Stalin, Stalinism (they have themselves

used the term) and Stalin's heirs. Eugene Dennis, General Secretary of the American CP has tried to straddle the two points of view.

All three groups fell into line with the resolution of the CPSU. At the same time in its own resolution, the National Committee of the American party clung to its right to maintain differences on two points on which the Daily Worker had previously criticized the Soviet government sharply—namely, "the question of bureaucratic distortions of Socialist society, as well as the happenings in the sphere of Jewish cultural institutions and their leadership."

While the American leadership is toeing the line laid down in the resolution of the CC of the CPSU it is significant that it still voices implied criticism on questions that involve the very basis of the rule of the Soviet oligarchy.

How account for the differences in the original reaction to the end of the Stalin cult, and then in the degree of compliance with the edict of the CC of the CPSU? Do they reflect genuine ideological differentiations in the Stalinist apparatus? Or do they stem from the different problems confronting the

Deep in the Siberian mine
Keep your patience proud,
The bitter toil shall not be lost
The rebel thought unbowed.
The heavy hanging chains
will fall,
The walls will crumble at a
word;
And freedom greet you in the
light,
And brothers give you back
the sword.

— Pushkin (1827)

French, Italian and American parties respectively? We will deal with these questions in a forthcoming article.

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