

WEST'S COMMUNIST PARTIES SHAKEN

By HARRISON E. SALISBURY

What has happened to the Communist movement in the Western World under the impact of de-Stalinization and the events in Poland and Hungary? How have the individual parties, their policies and leadership survived the dramatic impact of these events? The following article is based upon reports from New York Times correspondents in key centers.

The Communist movement of the Western World has been shaken—badly but apparently not fatally—by the devastating events in Poland and Hungary.

Moscow's denunciation of Stalin—and the current less harsh attitude toward the Soviet dictator—undermined many basic Communist shibboleths. This has made it more difficult for many Communist parties to adjust to the new and fluid situations of recent months.

Communist party reaction to the kaleidoscopic events of the last year varies sharply from country to country.

The American Communist party, beset with internal strain as well as the new ideological stress stemming from Moscow's acts, has hammered out a new policy that looks, on the surface, very much like national communism.

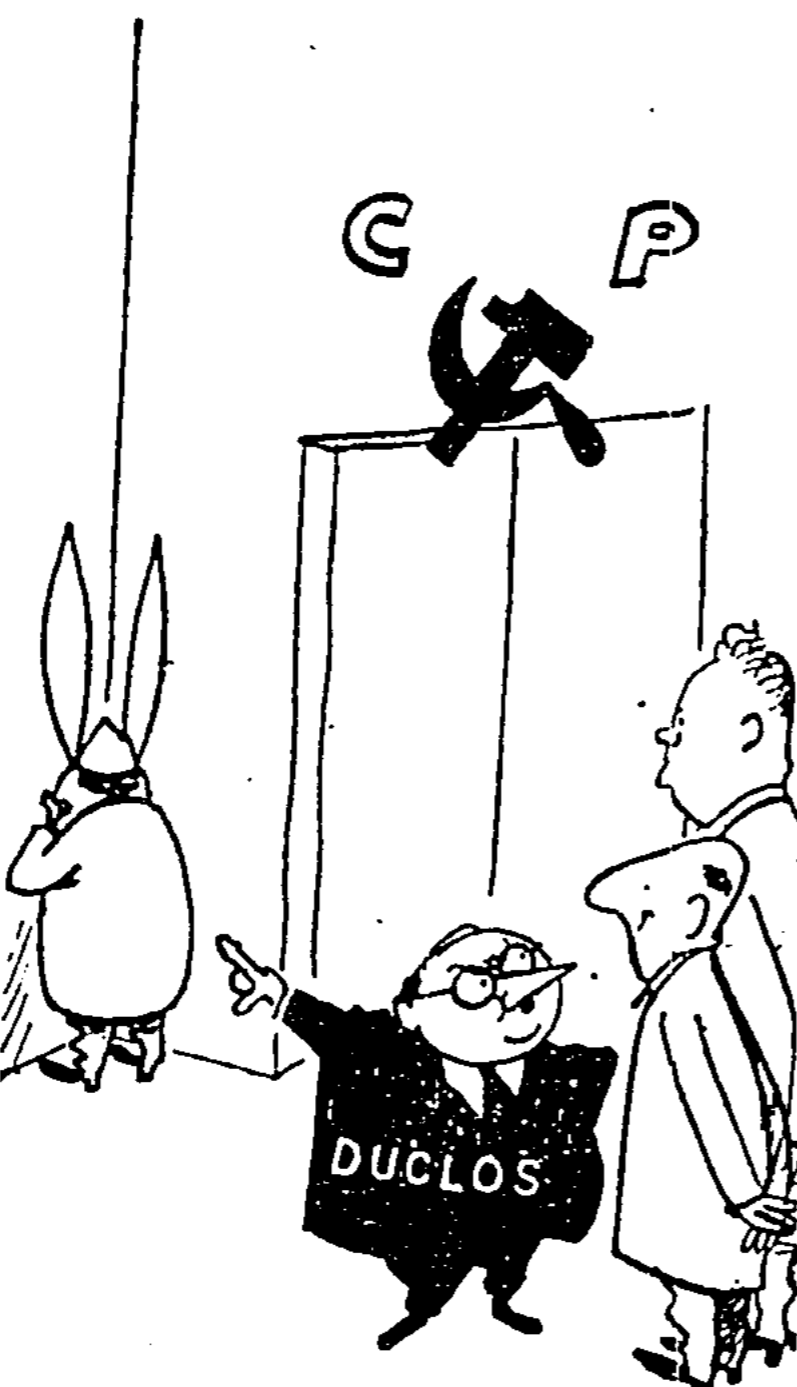
Modification Resisted

In France, the hard-line Stalinist party chiefs, Maurice Thorez and Jacques Duclos, have resisted every effort to modify the party's position.

Between these two extremes a variety of other approaches can be found. One thing is uniform. The past year has been a grueling one for every Western Communist party. Not one has escaped without major losses in mass membership. And each, regardless of line, has suffered the desertion of many of its more brilliant and intellectually adventurous members. But, regardless of reaction or repercussion, each of the Communist parties is still functioning, even that in Western Germany, where an outlawing bill has driven it underground.

The Communist party that has emerged from the bewildering history of the last twelve months

Report on the Effect Of Recent Events



Woop in L'Aurore, Paris

"The dunce in the corner believes in real democracy."

is in the best shape, apparently that of Italy. In the 1956 general elections Communists polled 6,500,000 votes in Italy. Today their total, observers estimate, would be down at least 1,000,000 votes.

That Italy's Communists have ridden the storm with no great losses is undoubtedly due to their flexible tactics and strategy. Palmiro Togliatti, the party veteran leader.

Togliatti and Tito

Signor Togliatti was the first major Western party leader to sense how the winds of de-Stalinization were blowing. He quickly paid a visit to Marshal Tito in Belgrade and emerged last June as the spokesman for what Signor Togliatti called the new "polycentric" basis of international communism.

Signor Togliatti said that henceforth communism would not draw all its inspiration from Moscow. It would have several bases. He embraced wholeheartedly the new theory of Nikita S. Khrushchev that individual countries (and as he noted individual Communist parties would pursue separate and indi-

vidual roads toward communism. Moscow rapped the Togliatti knuckles but before that could happen several Western Communist parties—notably those in the United States, Canada and England—enthusiastically embraced the new Togliatti theses.

As the Moscow winds blew colder, Signor Togliatti spoke less and less of "polycentrism." But he did not retreat completely and this measure of independence served him well when the explosions of Hungary and Poland destroyed so many well-constructed Communist tenets.

The Italian party took severe losses as a result of the Soviet Army's attack upon the workers of Budapest. But the faint sign of a more independent line on the part of Signor Togliatti was an asset the Italian leader continued to cultivate.

When Moscow began to put out feelers seeking the reinstatement of the Cominform or Comintern, Signor Togliatti opposed the idea.

As The New York Times correspondent in Italy observed: "It would be wishful thinking of the most dangerous kind to believe that the Italian Communist party and the Communist movement in general have suffered a mortal blow."

Outdoing Moscow

In the sharpest contrast to Italy, the French Communist party has attempted to be more Stalinist than Moscow. The French party was the last to admit that de-Stalinization had occurred. The French Communist newspaper L'Humanité could hardly be persuaded even to refer to the Khrushchev speech.

Since M. Thorez was one of Stalin's closest henchmen, this was perhaps not unnatural.

It was also not unnatural that the French party suffered the most grievous losses, particularly on the intellectual front, where trouble erupted in the satellite countries.

Here, again, M. Thorez insisted on the most doctrinaire Soviet explanation. He went further. L'Humanité attacked the Gomulka regime in Poland with a vigor that Moscow never displayed.

The consequences were what might have been expected. The party's most brilliant literary luminary, Jean-Paul Sartre, has broken savagely with the party.

Picasso Challenge

Underneath the surface the party is said to be in a state of ferment. Pablo Picasso and a group of party intellectuals have challenged the line on Hungary. There have been indications that M. Thorez has been able to avert an explosion only with the greatest difficulty.

Ultimately, it seems certain, the French party will be torn by a major split. Meantime, M. Thorez continues to try to act as whipping boy for the Kremlin among Western Communists. He has repeatedly differed with Signor Togliatti.

The internal effects of M. Thorez's Stalinist line have been serious. The French party's influence in the General Confederation of Labor, which is Communist controlled, has been dropping and the party vote in by-elections has fallen.

The most spectacular effects of the Communist cataclysm have been observed in the minuscule American Communist party. The American party was the first to clutch the de-Stalinization policy to its bosom.

Almost immediately the party's organ, The New York Daily Worker, adopted an attitude of criticism toward Moscow. The



Alexander in The Philadelphia Bulletin
"The runaway announces his intentions."

pages of the newspaper were opened to free-swinging discussion of party policy, Russian policy and any other matters that the comrades had on their minds.

The Worker policy, it quickly became apparent, was not the policy of a united American party. It was opposed by the old party chairman, William Z. Foster, a staunch Stalinist. Eugene Dennis, the party secretary, took a considerably more moderate position.

The Worker group embraced Signor Togliatti's views, wrote with approval of Marshal Tito and opened up a line of attack against Moscow.

When East Europe blew up, the Worker sided with Wladyslaw Gomulka in Poland, and, gingerly but definitely, against the Soviet action in Hungary.

By the time the American party congress ratified a somewhat toned-down version of the Daily Worker line the American party had maneuvered itself into a position half-way between Marshal Tito and M. Gomulka in independence of Moscow's ideological dictatorship.

The Canadian and British parties have moved in the same direction as the American.

British Party

However, the British party—almost as small, relative to population, as the American—has not moved quite so far and recently has suffered sharp losses in consequence. Two of the British party's most stalwart supporters, John Horner, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, and Alex Moffat, a leader of the National Union of Mineworkers in Scotland, have left the party, as have a number of members of The London Daily Worker staff.

The crucial issue in the case of the British Communists was the official party position defending the use of Soviet troops in Hungary.

This was the issue that broke the back of the Austrian Communist party, which is estimated to have lost half of its 120,000 members. The Austrian party postponed its national convention because of the deep split. The Austrian party leadership has apparently been trying to evolve some formula akin to that of the American Communist party which will enable the Austrian Communists to hold at least part of the membership. But thus far the efforts do not seem to be very successful.

The Communist party in West Germany was reported to be virtually ineffective even before it was outlawed by the Bonn Government. The underground skeleton is regarded as hard-core Stalinist and not likely to be affected regardless of what happens in Moscow.