

A SPLIT IN THE PARTY?

Differences in estimates concerning the size and direction of the contradictions of American capitalism provide the basis for current divergences among the leaders of the American Communist Party. The right wing of the party offers a theoretical blueprint for the possible peaceful transition to socialism. They maintain that social life and social contradictions are moving in a special way in this country and that Marxist-Leninist principles valid for other countries are not applicable in the United States. Some of them even advance the absurd claim that the cold war struggle could have been avoided had the party followed the Browder line.

The Draft Resolution calls for modification of Marxism-Leninism in the light of American experience. According to Foster (*Political Affairs*, October 1956), the national committee recently refused to endorse Marxism-Leninism as the theoretical base of the party and deleted the term from the preamble to the proposed new party constitution.

The left wing led by Foster condemns the new talk about the stability of American capitalism and the complacency regarding the ease of political changes as leading to the substitution of class collaboration for the class struggle and a repudiation of Marxism-Leninism. Foster attacked the deletion of the term Marxism-Leninism as "a cowardly retreat in face of the offensive by American imperialism." He also accuses the right wing of bourgeois nationalism, support of "progressive capitalism" and of liquidationism. Although admitting the need for modifying tactics to conform with American requirements, he

insists that Marxism-Leninism is a philosophic approach "quite flexible enough to encompass the situation in every country," including the United States.

In Foster's opinion, no planning by business or government can prevent another economic crisis once conditions mature. Such a crisis, he believes, will result in the radicalization of the workingclass, mounting class struggles and renewed attempts by reaction to impose fascism.

"American monopoly capitalism," Foster declared in the June issue of *Political Affairs*, "the richest, strongest, most reactionary, most ruthless in the world would be certain to use every means within its power, legal and extralegal to try to beat back the advance of a militant movement of the workingclass and the masses of the people who are aiming at seriously curbing and ultimately breaking the political power of the monopolists. No other rational conclusion than this can be drawn from the big capitalists' long and lurid history of lawless repression of the workers during strikes . . . their cynical corruption of the government, their prostitution of almost every institution."*

Foster alludes to real dangers.

American Communist leaders may embark on a program of revisionism on the strength of the "exceptionality" of American capitalism and its ability to apply

*Similar conclusions were arrived at by Gil Green, the imprisoned member of the National Committee, in his book, *The Enemy Forgotten* (1956). He wrote: "Given a mighty rise of the popular forces, the most reactionary groupings of monopoly will seek to impose a form of McCarthyism upon the country. . . . While the ultra-reactionary wing has temporarily been subdued, McCarthyism is by no means dead. It must be remembered that Hitler made his first bid in 1923-24. He failed in this attempt, even landed in jail. But in 1930, when the economic crisis broke, the most powerful German industrial magnates shifted their support to him and his Nazi hordes. Within three years Hitler held state power."

more or less "permanent" props to the national economy. The eagerness to reverse the former leftist error of prematurely predicting crisis, and bedazzlement by present prosperity may lead to serious blunders.

Such revisionism may end in reformism and betrayal of the class struggle, as the experience of German Marxists at the turn of the century proved. At that time German imperialism was undergoing an unprecedented boom. Industry, technology and above all the arms industry were expanding rapidly. The living standards of German workers rose above those of all other European workers. The class struggle relaxed; the trade union movement grew. Basing themselves on a superficial analysis of current conditions, German Marxists advanced the theory of the inapplicability of orthodox Marxism to German conditions. They preached the uniqueness and exceptionalism of German national traditions and of German capitalist development. What actually proved "unique" about the German national scene was the reformism and betrayal of these workingclass leaders and the exceptional savagery of German imperialism.

Foster attributes the present crisis within the party to enemy pressure, the crippling effects of government attacks, the Krushchev report and "tactical rigidities." The party," he wrote, "could not have avoided suffering severe losses." Foster claims that the Draft Resolution intensifies the crisis within the party, inducing moods of "self-destructive . . . pessimism and liquidationism."