

Foster's Pretension To Leninism

By Harry Ring

The development of the struggle within the Communist Party has served to make clear the political character of that faction in the Party leadership led by Daily Worker editor John Gates. Their desire to dissolve the Communist Party into an amorphous league and to abandon any pretense of a class struggle program demonstrates the extent to which they have buckled under the pressure of U.S. imperialism.

Reacting against the liquidationist aims of the Gates group, a number of militant workers in the CP have turned for leadership to Party Chairman William Z. Foster who presents himself in the fight as the champion of a Marxist-Leninist, class struggle program.

But where does Foster differ fundamentally with Gates on program? Like Gates, Foster is 100% in favor of supporting the Democratic party. And all of his "left" phrases about an "eventual" farmer-labor party cannot erase the fact that supporting the Democratic party, a Big Business party, constitutes not class struggle but class collaboration. With his support to a capitalist party, Foster is not defending the class line. He is crossing it.

Foster's pro-Democratic Party line does not flow merely from alleged "tactical" considerations. It derives from a basic class-collaborationist perspective. As recently as October 1955, Foster wrote in Political Affairs that he anticipates the development of a peace movement "which will embrace not only workers and other democratic elements, but also important sections of the bourgeoisie and even of monopoly capital itself." If this perspective is the basis for a class-struggle program then Sam Gompers was a super-Bolshevik.

Supporters of Foster have correctly scored the Gates tendency for its efforts to adapt to American capitalist public opinion. But does Foster and those in the leadership associated with him offer the alternative of genuine proletarian internationalism? The attitude of the leading Fosterites toward the Hungarian and Polish events demonstrates that their conception of internationalism boils down to a virulent, Stalinist-type defense of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

STAND ON HUNGARY

At a recent Jefferson School symposium on the CP Draft Resolution, Abraham Unger presented the Foster viewpoint. Discussing the use of Soviet troops to crush the uprising of the Hungarian workers, Unger proclaimed that the only mistake made by the Kremlin was that it did not send the troops in soon enough.

What a graphic picture of Foster's "class-struggle" line this presents. In the U.S. "important sections of the bourgeoisie and even of monopoly capital itself" are regarded as a force for peace and progress. But the revolutionary Hungarian proletariat which is waging a struggle for national liberation and workers' democracy are "Horthy-lovers" to be shot down by Kremlin tanks.

This same grotesque caricature of "Leninist internationalism" is exhibited in a letter by Unger to the Oct. 29 Daily Worker condemning the Gomulka regime in Poland. The fact that the pressure of the workers forced Gomulka to demand and get a small measure of independence from Kremlin dictation is branded by Unger as a "setback to socialism."

Unger very generously concedes that "socialist collaboration (with the Soviet Union) placed severe burdens on the Polish leaders." And with true bureaucratic arrogance, he adds, "They were called upon to fill quota tasks in which they failed." The fact that these "leaders" were handpicked Kremlin agents is ignored by Unger who also supported them until they failed to keep the Polish workers in line.

Ignored also by Unger is the fact that the quotas were onerous ones, arbitrarily established by Kremlin ukase. And completely ignored is the fact that these quotas pumped products into the Soviet Union at the expense of the living standards of the Polish masses, for the products were paid for at only a fraction of their value.

Unger unblushingly asserts, "There is not the slightest evidence of Russian interference with Polish sovereignty." Khrushchev's unsuccessful attempt to dictate the composition of the Polish CP Politburo with the threat of armed intervention is undoubtedly the freshest example of such "non-interference" with Polish sovereignty.

In the classic language of great-Russian chauvinism, Unger proclaims that "the non-exploiting collaboration of the two states, one big and powerful, the other small and weak, has been a true example of Democracy." (Our emphasis.)

Unger's indictment of the Poles reeks of the approach originally employed by Stalin in 1922 when he launched repressions against the people of Soviet Georgia whom he branded as "social-nationalists." In three letters, made public after the 20th Congress, Lenin sharply attacked Stalin and those associated with him in this chauvinistic business.

Lenin insisted on the need to grant concessions to national minorities and declared, "A Georgian who takes a scornful attitude toward this side of the matter, who scornfully flings out the charge of 'social-nationalism' (when he himself is not only a 'social-nationalist' but an uncouth great-Russian bully). . . damages the interests of proletarian class solidarity."

Excoriating the Ungers of that time, Lenin wrote, "Internationalism on the side of the oppressing or so-called 'great' nation (although great only in its violence, great only in its sense of brutality) must consist not only in observing the formal equality of nations, but also in such inequality as will make up on the side of the oppressing nation, the big nation, for the inequality which in fact arises in life. Whoever does not understand this does not understand the proletarian attitude toward the national question." (Political Affairs, November 1956.)

Lenin's stand on the Georgian question applies with a thousand times more force to the problem of Hungary and Poland today. His words provide a crushing refutation of the counterfeit "Leninism" of Unger and Foster.