

The National Convention Of the Communist Party

An Editorial

The convention of the Communist Party of the U.S., Feb. 9-12, is taking place against the background of a world-wide crisis in the Communist movement, a crisis that has fully engulfed the American CP.

For the top leadership of the CP, the crisis consists in the fact that its bureaucratic control of the party has been shaken and it has been unable to replace this control with genuine political authority.

For the CP members, especially the CP militant workers and youth whose entire life is at the disposal of the workers' cause, the crisis has posed the fundamental question as to how socialism will be realized.

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with its admissions about Stalin's brutal rule, shattered the central core of the CP militants' convictions on this score.

ROAD TO WORLD SOCIALISM

It had been their firm belief that socialism was genuinely being built up in the Soviet orbit; that if given sufficient time and if left alone by world imperialism, the Soviet Union would demonstrate the viability of the socialist program in life. From the sacrifices of the Soviet working people would come a social order of such appeal for the exploited and oppressed of the world that they would ultimately be impelled on the road to socialism, too.

The Stalin cult was indissolubly tied to this perspective, since it was believed that thanks to Stalin's leadership the road to socialism was being secured.

The CP militants believed that the Communist Party in the U.S. would ultimately succeed in bringing the working class to socialism here in the wake of the achievements in the USSR, provided, of course,

the CP played a role in the struggles of the working people.

Acceptance of the premise that Stalin's policies were paving the road to world socialism, led the CP militants to go along with switches in party line in tune with the changes in Stalin's diplomacy. It also led to acceptance of the class-collaboration politics — support of American imperialism in World War II, support of the Democratic Party, alliance with the pro-imperialist labor bureaucracy, etc. — foisted on them by a leadership that was totally subservient to the Kremlin.

Actually, the policies of Stalinism, as is now becoming clear, represented nothing but the narrow national interests of a conservative bureaucracy; they represented a break with the revolutionary internationalism of Lenin. The progress of the world anti-capitalist revolution and the industrialization of the Soviet Union took place not because of the Stalinist theory and practice of "socialism in one country" but despite it. For a long historic period, however, this was not clear to the mass of Communist workers.

20th CONGRESS ADMISSIONS

Now, the admissions at the 20th Congress, especially Khrushchev's revelations, have dealt the very premise upon which CP militants operated a shattering blow.

These admissions and revelations showed only a part of the picture of Stalinist degeneration in the Soviet Union, but this was enough to arouse revulsion in the socialist consciousness of innumerable CP members.

Frameup trials, national oppression, anti-Semitism, mass killings amounting to genocide, absolute one-man rule, and unheard of military and economic mis-

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management — all these the heads of the CPSU admitted had taken place.

They put the blame for these crimes on aberrations of Stalin, while claiming that the basic policies of his regime were sound. They promised sweeping reforms in the direction of democracy, elimination of bureaucracy, better living conditions for the masses. And they granted limited reforms.

The assurances of Stalin's heirs that they had now corrected the "errors" of Stalinism were put to a test in the revolutionary outbreaks in Poland and Hungary. These uprisings were verification that the admission, promises and actual reforms at the 20th Congress arose from the pressure of the Soviet-orbit working masses for an end to bureaucratic dictatorship and not from any socialist consciousness on the part of Khrushchev and Co.

This pressure exploded in revolutionary mass struggles in Poland and Hungary. It will inevitably explode in revolutionary struggles in the Soviet Union itself. The aims of the masses were clearly spelled out by the Hungarian Workers Councils, the organs of working-class struggle. These aims are: workers' democracy on the basis of the socialized property.

TWO ROADS

The crushing of the Hungarian revolution by Soviet troops brings the CP militants in this country to the crossroads. One road leads back to Stalinism, to the subordination of the Communist parties to the Kremlin rulers. That in turn means having to swallow the frame-up that the Hungarian workers were really "fascist-inspired." It means having to accept Kadar and his decree of the death penalty for strikers. It means covering up for brutal repressions added to a previously long list of Stalinist crimes.

The other road leads to a complete break with Stalinist crimes and Stalinist apologetics. For all those who are devoted to the communist cause, this opens the door to the genuine Leninist program again. It means reliance on the worldwide class struggle as the road to socialism. It does not mean placing a cross over the Soviet Union. The social foundations (nationalized property, planned economy) are progressive and must be defended as the premise for socialist construction. But no support for the rapacious bureaucracy, which Stalin led to power against the regime of workers' democracy headed by Lenin and Trotsky.

It is true that the capitalist class and the State Department "socialists" advocate a break with Stalinism, citing its crimes. They identify Stalinism with Communism, just as the Stalinists do. But they proclaim the road to "socialism" to be support for Wall Street's side in the war against the Soviet orbit. That is the worst betrayal of socialism.

We know that many CP militants are pressing for a break with Stalinism and for a return to the principles of Leninism.

Steuben, CP Labor Writer, Hits Kadar 'Death to Strikers' Law

On Jan. 19, John Steuben, a prominent member of the Communist Party in an interview with A. H. Raskin on the New York Times, urged American Communists to "repudiate everything that smacks of Stalinism."

Steuben is a former union organizer and has written books and articles on labor. These have been translated and widely circulated in the Soviet orbit. He joined the CP 35 years ago.

Like a host of other CP members, Steuben was upset about Soviet trends since Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. But he told Raskin, he made a private resolve "to live out my few remaining years in agony and silence." (Steuben suffers from a bad heart condition.)

"Now," he said, "the announcement of the death penalty for Hungarian strikers makes me feel I must cry out against such a crime, particularly when it is done in the name of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.'"

Any government that decrees death for strikers, said Steuben, is "morally bankrupt." The excesses of Stalinism are not only being continued by Khrushchev and his gang but are taking on worse forms and dimensions.

Steuben told Raskin that he would not turn informer. "What this country needs is not more informers but room for more debate and discussion in the market of great ideas."

Thus far, however, this pressure has found no clear expression in the party leadership. All attempts of the revolutionary elements in the ranks of the CP to express their will through the two factions, headed by Gates and Foster, have been frustrated.

GATES AND FOSTER FACTIONS

We have no doubt that many rank and file workers in the CP turned with hope to the Gates group, thinking that this group was embarking on a genuine break with Stalinism. However, the obvious tendencies of the Gates group leaders to jump from the frying pan of Stalinism into the fire of reformist Social Democracy could not but baffle and alarm class-conscious militants.

On the other hand, when turning to Foster in the hope that he will champion resistance to opportunism and liquidationism, the rank and file militant is confronted with Foster's cynical adherence to Stalinism as well as his solid agreement with the Gates faction on the whole opportunist course symbolized by the class-collaborationist support of the Democratic Party.

Where to turn? What to do? There is only one way. It is necessary to break out of the treacherous circle of Stalinism. The leadership for this task must be found in the ranks in every locality. Communist workers must insist that the discussion continue and deepen. The source of Stalinist degeneration must be probed. The old taboos on a study of Trotsky's analysis must be destroyed. Only by a thoroughgoing Leninist discussion can the progressive solution to the party crisis be found.