

# Bittleman's 'Fresh Look' at CP Crisis

By Harry Ring

"By its very nature the 20th Congress [of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] was bound to inspire true democrats, Socialists and Communists," says Alexander Bittleman in his serialized article on the crisis of the Communist Party entitled, "I Take a Fresh Look." As of this writing, eleven installments have appeared in the Daily Worker.

According to Bittleman, "Communists especially were bound to be stimulated by the fresh look which the 20th Congress took at the world, to themselves take a fresh look at their own programs, policies and organizations."

But, he woefully adds, "in our own Party it did not work out quite like that. The bright new vision tended to become somewhat obscured for the American people and the American Communist Party by certain aspects in the reappraisal of Stalin's role. . . This may not have added much to our difficulties," Bittleman informs us, "but it certainly did not help."

This almost ludicrous "estimate" of the shattering impact of the 20th Congress on the Communist Party is born of Bittleman's efforts to prove the roots of the CP crisis are purely "American," springing from unfavorable "objective" circumstances in this country and "subjective" errors by the party.

## STEIN'S VIEW

The entire tract is intended to provide a "theoretical" platform for the drive now being launched by the Eugene Dennis-Sid Stein wing of the CP leadership (with the apparent acquiescence of Wm. Z. Foster) to "reconstruct" the crisis-ridden organization. This drive was opened with a report by Stein, national organization secretary of the party, to a July 27 National Committee meeting and entitled, "Rebuild the Party!"

In this report, to the party bureaucrats, Stein did not try to slither around the obvious relation of the 20th Congress to the CP crisis as Bittleman does in the Daily Worker. The basis for the crisis, said Stein, is found "in the serious weakening of what some of us call our moorings or our ideological foundations." These consist of "confidence in the first land of socialism. . . For 27 years such confidence abounded in our party." But, he added, "the foundations crumbled when it became clear from the 20th Congress of the CPSU that Soviet society was not as we had pictured it."

Stein, like Bittleman, signaled the need to divert the discussion in CP circles from the grave issues posed by the 20th Congress. The need of the hour, they both say, is to concentrate on "American" problems.

Stein assured one and all that democratization will be "accelerated" by Khrushchev and company. But he was very chary of putting all the CP's eggs in one basket. "I do not want to create the impression," he hastily added, "that it is the foundation of our ideological rebuilding. . . For the ideological roots of our party are right here in our own country."

This does not mean that Stein favors cutting the CP's ideological ties with the Kremlin. It is necessary to combat the notion, he declared, "that our future depends on disassociating ourselves from the land of socialism."

## DANGER IN DISCUSSION

But both Stein and Bittleman understand that the projected "reconstruction" cannot proceed on the basis of a searching, party-wide discussion of the revelations from "the land of socialism" which made the "re-

construction" project necessary in the first place. Such a discussion would reveal not only that the CP leaders made the "error" of serving as blind apologists for Stalin, but also that their politics were, and still remain, tailored to serve the interests of Kremlin foreign policy and not the interests of the American, the Soviet, or the world working class.

For example, Bittleman points to the period when Earl Browder was dumped as one where the party "went overboard" in changing its line. Omitted, however, is the key fact that neither the decision to oust Browder, nor the change in line,

## Some Buried History About Bittleman

The Daily Worker failed to offer a single biographical note in publishing Alexander Bittleman's "fresh look" series. This omission undoubtedly arises out of the fact that Communist Party history proved embarrassing after the Stalin revelations. Yet some of Bittleman's history should be of interest. In 1937 he undertook the defense of Stalin's frame-up trials. He wrote a pamphlet called "Trotsky the Traitor" in which he said, "Conspiracy with Hitler and Japan to dismember the Soviet Union . . . to engage in wrecking activities . . . to plan assassination of Soviet leaders. . . Trotsky and his agents have been proven guilty of all these unspeakable crimes." From the 20th Congress came the admission that these charges were all lies. Little wonder he and his fellow CP leaders fear discussion of the 20th Congress. It is easier to forget than to explain.

originated in the American CP. That particular somersault—as with all the others since the Stalinization of the party in the 1920's—sprang directly from the changed foreign policy needs of the bureaucratic caste in the Kremlin.

But, it will be argued, all of that is in the past. Now "the ideological roots of our party are right here in our own country."

## LIVE TOGETHER

Those who may believe this should read Bittleman with particular care. If nothing else, he has the dubious distinction of spelling out the policy of the party leadership in surprisingly frank fashion. His point of departure is the line reiterated at the 20th Congress on the need to establish a "durable era" of peaceful co-existence with world capitalism. He spells out the fact that the Kremlin concept of co-existence means a "live and let live" deal with capitalism which completely sacrifices the interests of the workers.

"The emerging period of peaceful co-existence and competition," announces Bittleman, "does not call for the abolition of capitalism in the U.S. . . . To use the scientific terminology of Marxism-Leninism, the social and political nature of the struggle will be generally democratic, not socialist."

Can the OP be "reconstructed" on the basis of a program which rules out a socialist perspective for an entire "historical period?" Does such a program coincide with the reality of American developments? We will return to these questions.