

COMMUNISTS HERE CHIDED BY DUCLOS

Dennis and Foster Disagree on His Bid for Solidarity as Convention Opens

By PETER KIHSS

The Communist party of the United States has received a letter from Jacques Duclos, top French Communist, chiding it for "dangerous" tendencies and urging solidarity with Soviet foreign policy.

The letter, disclosed yesterday at the opening of the party's first national convention since 1950, brought a defense of the American group from its secretary, Eugene Dennis. He said "our decisions will be our own."

But the party's 75-year-old chairman, William Z. Foster, declared M. Duclos was "correct," and in effect called for a purge of party leadership for rightist leanings and "a pro-Tito international course." Mr. Foster singled out for criticism John Gates, editor of The Daily Worker.

300 Sit Behind Closed Doors

Three hundred delegates met behind guarded, closed doors at the Chateau Gardens, 105 East Houston Street, near Second Avenue. The Communists said the use of more than twenty hotels had been denied them, and they met in a red-and-white building that was formerly a Russian Orthodox Church. It has been used for about nine years for public meetings and catered affairs.

Outside, men sat in police cars, apparently watching all who entered. The Communists said they had seen Federal Bureau of Investigation agents on hand. Simon W. Gerson, chairman of their press committee, said he had protested to the American Civil Liberties Union over the alleged filming of persons attending Communist meetings as "illegal harassment and an attack on freedom of assembly."

M. Duclos was the international Communist spokesman who first publicly criticized Earl Browder for turning the American Communist party into a political association in 1944.

His April, 1945, article was accepted by the Communists here as an admonition to be heeded—Mr. Browder himself called it "the general trend of

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opinion of European Marxists." It was followed by the reactivation of the party as such in July, 1945, and Mr. Browder's expulsion in 1946.

This time M. Duclos, secretary of the central committee of the French Communist party, wrote on Jan. 21 that "we believe that we discern dangerous departures" from Marxist-Leninist and Soviet-tested principles in recent activities of the United States party.

Hungarian Revolt Assailed

He said these included the proposed main convention resolution, and the party's Nov. 6 statement on developments in Poland and Hungary—which applauded Communists in those countries for seeking full national equality with the Soviet Union.

M. Duclos said "a more profound study of the real facts has already permitted you to make certain precisions and happy corrections for our common cause." American workers now know, he said, that "the real organizers of these events of the imperialist plan of counter-revolution" were supporters of the Crusade for Freedom who sought to split and destroy "the camp of socialism."

"The strengthening of international solidarity of the proletariat—thus of the national parties of the working class—is considered by us," M. Duclos wrote, "as one of the categorical imperatives of the present period of the international class struggle which implies solidarity with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, corresponding to the essential interests of the international proletariat, of peace and socialism, to the interests of the independence movements of the oppressed and dependent countries in the world."

Inner Struggle Is Seen

Indications were that M. Duclos' letter had caused some sharp struggles behind the international Communist scenes. A new greeting to the United States convention, signed by the French party's central committee as such, was made public yesterday as having arrived Friday.

In substance, it offered the same admonitions, but much softened. Deleted were epithets in which M. Duclos had warned that deviating from what he called basic conceptions was "to slide into the morass of social-democratic opportunism" and "liquidationist-revisionism."

Newsmen were barred from the convention here, but brief-

ings were given by a four-member press committee headed by Mr. Gerson. The texts of Mr. Dennis' and Mr. Foster's speeches were also made available.

Mr. Dennis' declaration that the party here would make its own decisions was said in some quarters to have evoked applause. In response to what he called M. Duclos' "misgivings," he asserted the party's present main line here was "Marxist-Leninist in content" and accorded with "the interests and democratic traditions of our country," "proletarian solidarity" and "generalized experience of the international working class."

Mr. Dennis further asserted that the bulk of the party's membership now wished to continue as a party, but with greater internal democracy.

Most members, he also said, now regard the situation in Hungary—where Soviet forces last fall suppressed the revolt of workers and students—as an "imperialist-backed attempt at counter-revolution."

The "main strategic task," Mr. Dennis said, was to "effect a new democratic political alignment" of groups opposing monopolies. The "nation's No. 1 task," he said, is "to democratize the South."

Dennis Admits 'Errors'

The speech renewed confessions of "left-sectarian" errors by the party's leaders. In another possible reflection of outside criticism, Mr. Dennis said there had been among American Communists "a narrow and undialectical approach to such profound Marxist-Leninist documents as the recent statement of the Communist party of China 'On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.'"

Mr. Foster is suffering from heart trouble, and his speech was read by former City Councilman Benjamin J. Davis Jr. Mr. Foster bitterly denounced Mr. Gates for having proposed to replace the party by a "political action association"—a proposal the Gates group is now ready to defer for more discussion.

Such a proposal, Mr. Foster said, would "largely liquidate our forces." He said M. Duclos had correctly warned of "revisionist tendencies in our party," and "this convention should welcome the sage and friendly advice of our French comrades and others."

He called on delegates to "solve the party leadership crisis," particularly in New York. He declared party leaders, in dealing with the Polish and Hungarian events, mistakenly "tended to put the national question of political independence ahead of the higher questions of world peace and socialism."

The convention was reported

to have opened at 11:45 A. M. with the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner." An American flag flew on the stage, and slogans on the walls called for: "Full Equality of the Negro People . . . Welfare Not Warfare . . . For Peaceful Coexistence . . . Build and Support The Daily Worker."

Fred M. Fine, executive secretary, opened the session. Claude Lightfoot, Illinois chairman, was elected as morning chairman. They were among many delegates indicted or convicted on Federal Smith Act charges for conspiracy to teach and advocate violent overthrow of the Government or belonging to a group so teaching and advocating. Those attending were free on bail.

While reporters and photographers were kept out, the convention admitted a dozen outside observers described as non-Communists who had disagreed, for instance, with Russian policy in Hungary but who were "defenders of civil liberties."

The group was led by the Rev. A. J. Muste, who said he had been a nonpartisan since giving up a Trotskyist post as secretary of the Workers party of the United States in 1936.

Norman Thomas, former So-

cialist candidate for President, helped to arrange for the group's attendance, but had to keep a previous date in Florida. Three members represented the New York Civil Liberties Union.

The convention adopted a telegram, introduced by Carl Winter, Michigan chairman, calling on President Eisenhower "to issue in the South a new Eisenhower doctrine" to enforce the Supreme Court's desegregation decisions. The telegram said "the bombs are falling in Alabama, not in the Middle East."

The Soviet Communist party was among those reported as sending greetings to the convention. The Soviet message said the American party was "proving that you have no other interests than the interests of the working class and the toiling mass of the U. S. A." No foreign observers attended, and the French message reported the State Department had denied visas to two who had been invited.