

HAS COMINTERN GONE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC?

By JAY LOVESTONE

We are not among those who will minimize or reject even the smallest crumbs of comfort that can be drawn from the deliberations and decisions of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern. Though it is still only on paper, yet we hasten to welcome and recognize as no small achievement for the ICO the very tardy first signs of conversion of the CI to our position for the organizational reform of the world party of communism; to our position that the strategy and tactics of every CP must be decided on the basis of "the concrete situation and specific conditions obtaining in each particular country"; to our position for revolutionary transition slogans such as workers' control of production.

Far be it from us to be so cruel and ungrateful as to pooh-pooh these positively worthwhile steps taken by the Congress in the realm of policy. Why, we are even prepared to hail this bow towards "exceptionalism" and democratic centralism as a sort of contrition for the past destructive inner party course and outer strategic and tactical line—provided vigorous efforts are to be taken forthwith to translate this new-found faith into life, into everyday practice by the sections of the Comintern.

DANGER SIGNALS

However, as we review the new position taken by the Seventh Congress on such vital questions of principle as bourgeois democracy and imperialist war, we are, after more than six years of struggle against ultra-left sectarianism, reminded of a declaration we made right after the split of our party in 1929 by the ECCI. We then said:

"Of course, it is clear for any Marxist that if the revision on matters of analysis, policy, strategy and tactics is permitted to continue without resistance and goes far enough, then, it will ultimately lead to an undermining of the fundamental principles of our movement and to the eventual loss of the Communist character of our Parties . . ." (Crisis in CPUSA, p. 73).

We cannot underscore too heavily the fact that particularly in its new line to-

In The Pre-Convention Discussion Of The Communist Opposition

wards bourgeois democracy, the CI is perilously treading a course which if put into practice, if tried in the life of the class struggle, can only lead to the above condition against which we long ago registered such a sharp warning. As applied in France, this attitude towards bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism now generalized by the Seventh Congress for all sections of the CI, has already led the CP to do precisely what the French reformist SP has been doing. On this basis the French Communist Party has given unconditional support to Herriot's Radical Socialist candidates in the recent municipal elections, has declared its readiness to support a bourgeois-social democratic government—in short has distorted the proletarian united front and turned it into an appendix of the old Left Cartel.

DEFENSE OF "DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS"

The new Comintern demand for the defense of "democratic rights" in general instead of a fight concretely for the defense of the democratic rights of the workers can spell only support of bourgeois democracy as a system of capitalist domination, of the bourgeois parliamentary republic as such. This is the policy of Social-Democracy with which we Communists broke when we split with world social reformism and founded the Communist International. A sharp distinction must be drawn here along the following lines: The fight for the democratic rights of the workers is a phase of the struggle for developing sufficient working class prowess for the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. Such a fight not only does not prevent but even enables the Communists all the more easily to propagandize simultaneously for Soviets and the proletarian dictatorship. But, the defense of democratic rights in general—especially in the fully developed capitalist countries—is not at all a phase of the struggle for sufficient proletarian strength to estab-

lish a proletarian dictatorship. In fact, this fight in itself is in conflict with and excludes even propaganda for, let alone organizational preparation of, the proletarian dictatorship.

To fight for bourgeois democracy as such means—particularly in countries like France, England, U. S.—to fight against the very idea of proletarian dictatorship. We do not for a moment question the sincerity of comrades like Ercoli when they assure us that they still cling to the proletarian dictatorship as a goal while they are in the very midst of the fight for bourgeois democracy. Such loyal but merely subjective adherence to the proletarian dictatorship and Soviet power vanishes into thin air in the very defense of bourgeois democracy. This defense does not in the least undermine the confidence of the masses in capitalist democracy, as a bourgeois dictatorship; this does not help win the masses outside the CP for Soviet power, for the proletarian dictatorship.

Pursuing the above false course, the French CP has come forward with a concrete program for reforming and vitalizing bourgeois democracy in France. On the same basis, General Secretary Browder dangled before the Seventh World Congress a program for reforming and "democratizing" still more the Wall Street democracy. Thomas, Norris and Borah, Berle, Moley and Tugwell could hardly ask for more. The most consistent and logical defender of the policy of fighting for democratic rights in general instead of specific rights of the workers has been the American Civil Liberties Union. It is precisely on this basis that the ACLU has defended the democratic right of the Nazis to meet and organize in New Jersey and of Father Coughlin to secure Soldiers' Field in Chicago for a monster rally in behalf

candidates that appeared on our united bloc slate. The confusion created around the election place made it almost impossible for the honest voter to make up his mind since so many lies were being spread about the progressives. Instead

of anti-Semitism and against organized labor. Herein lies the mystery of the Chicago district of the CP joining hands with Father Coughlin in seeking a court order enjoining interference with his getting access to this meeting ground.

SOUNDING AN ALARM

At this point we are repeating the ABC of the Communist position as worked out by Lenin in the basic theses of the Communist International on the question of bourgeois democracy. Just now we are merely sounding the alarm against any further continuation of this policy the logic of which can lead only to the adoption of the full Social-Democratic theory on this principle question. Needless to say, the CPO must, with at least as much vigor, fight against this trend towards deviation in principle as it has fought against the crudest and most destructive of the old ultra-left tactics of the CI. To conclude that the beginning of this tendency, on the part of the Comintern, towards a Social-Democratic position in regard to democracy is already the full adoption by the CI of the attitude of the Second International would be the worst of folly. To react in this fashion means desisting from the struggle against this deviation by the CI in the direction of Social-Democracy; it means playing into the hands of and strengthening the base of social reformism.

More than that. The epithets of betrayal hurled at the CI by the stalwarts of Social-Democracy and by their little brothers, the Trotskyites, must not, in the least, blur our vision here. Certainly it comes with ill grace from those who have for years been hibernating in the Social-Democracy, or those who have recently been converted backwards from Communism to reformism, to label the official Communists as traitors on this score, on the ground of approaching the very position to which the Social-Democracy has been clinging.

With equally poor grace comes the

Trotskyite whining anent this deviation. Who was it but Trotsky who first proposed this wrong position towards bourgeois democracy for Communists? Indeed, our criticism of the new CI attitude towards bourgeois democracy is identical with the criticism we made of Trotsky himself when he first advocated this line now adopted by the Seventh Congress. Almost two years before the Seventh Congress, Trotsky demanded that the German workers fight for the restoration of the Weimar Constitution, that the international proletariat fight for "real democracy."

HAS C.I. GONE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC?

In order to be able to fight effectively against this beginning of a deviation in principle by the CI, it is absolutely necessary to make clear the differences between the latest position of the Comintern towards bourgeois democracy and the continued and time-dishonored classical position of world Social-Democracy. A cardinal principle of the entire Second International—but not of the Comintern—is that the socialist society can and is to be secured thru the medium and on the basis of bourgeois democracy. The whole idea of the proletarian dictatorship, the whole conception of Soviet power is foreign to, is incompatible with, and is outlawed by international Social-Democracy. Centrist Socialist Parties may play with revolutionary phrases and toss about red hot words, but in substance, in principle, in practice they adhere to the above-indicated fetish of bourgeois democracy.

The tragic error of the CI is to be found precisely in its declared readiness to join with the Social-Democracy and even petty bourgeois organizations in making bourgeois democracy, the bourgeois democratic system as such, of a defense against Fascism. In defense of this momentary and temporary maneuver with Marxist-Leninist principle, the Stalin followers argue: today, in the present conditions, the objective logic of the very struggle for democracy in general, for bourgeois democracy as such, will lead to a fight for and the success

(Continued on Page 4)

Has C.I. Gone Social-Democratic?

(Continued from Page 3)

of the proletarian dictatorship which remain the goal. Burdened with such reasoning, the French Communists have joined in one chorus with their Social-Democratic brethren and the followers of the bourgeois Radical Socialist Party to cry "Daladier in Power." Thru such a coalition government—SP, CP, and Herriot's Party which is itself responsible for Laval's emergency decrees against the workers—, thru this People's Front, the CP of France tells us the French proletariat will arrive at Soviets and Socialism. Here we have a limited but none the less dangerous deviation from principle by the CI.

WHAT IS NEW ON BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY?

What is really new in the problem of bourgeois democracy today, the new position of the Seventh Congress does not meet at all. What the Comintern fails to understand is that the germs of Fascism are imbedded in the very system of capitalist dictatorship known as bourgeois democracy. What the Comintern, willy-nilly, forgets is that the growing menace of Fascism is rooted in the very decay of capitalist democracy which is, of course, organically bound up with the decay of capitalist economy. Under these conditions, the problem confronting us is the following—the masses are losing faith in democracy, how can we win them for the proletarian dictatorship? How can we prevent their disillusionment with the capitalist dictatorship, known as bourgeois democracy, from being transformed into faith in and support of the Fascist system of capitalist dictatorship?

The decisive task we now face—in view of the rising threat of fascism—is how to answer the growing menace of this new weapon forged by big capital for the purpose of preserving its domination. This new weapon is counter-revolutionary anti-parliamentarism—Fascism. Shall we Communists pit or fight against counter-revolutionary anti-parliamentar-

ism with the decadent system of bourgeois democracy? No revolutionist can answer this question affirmatively. It is sad indeed to note the amazing faith in the vitality of bourgeois democracy so suddenly displayed by the Seventh World Congress. It should be obvious even to the most politically purblind that above all the very declaration of war would instantly mean the wiping out of all remnants of so-called democracy, of democratic rights in general, in those countries which are today still living under the capitalist parliamentary dictatorship.

THE EFFECTIVE ANSWER

It is our conviction that the most effective answer to the counter-revolutionary anti-parliamentarism of the Fascists is, not useless and suicidal efforts to revive the faith of the masses in bourgeois parliamentarism, in capitalist democracy, but rather reliance on revolutionary anti-parliamentarism. To this principle Communists must adhere rigidly. And to achieve the support of the masses for this principle is an absolute prerequisite for the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship based on Soviet power. It is not the job of the Communists to provide new oxygen pumps for capitalist democracy. It always was and still remains the task of the Communists to work out the necessary correct strategy and tactics for winning the majority of the workers away from all forms of capitalist dictatorship—parliamentary democratic, Fascist, monarchical, and military dictatorial—and for winning these masses over to a victorious struggle for the proletarian dictatorship as the vehicle thru which all class society is to be abolished and the socialist society is to be built.

"Left Government"

(Continued from Page 2)

support all measures which will carry out the above mentioned program. . . . The CGTU proposes that at the first at-