

The 'Daily Worker' and Hungary: Beating a Shamefaced Retreat

By H. W. BENSON

Where does the *Daily Worker* stand on Hungary?

If we followed its line only for the past month we would be totally unaware of the fact that a bitter dispute had raged in the Communist Party on this question and that the basic differences remained. There has been a shift from criticism of Russian policy toward a silent acquiescence to it.

Exactly what caused the change we cannot know in detail, but in general it is a symptom of a new balance of forces inside the party and an apparent decision of the *DW* board to retreat before the pounding of the Stalinist wing.

A distinct change was first noticeable toward the end of December. It was coincident with a meeting of the party's National Committee. Just what was decided and why we have no way of discovering, and also we cannot know the attitude of the *DW* board and its supporters. But it is obvious that a change of tone followed.

At the National Committee meeting, William Z. Foster summed up the two-month running discussion on Hungary in these words:

"At this stage, it can be said too that among the party national leadership there is practical agreement that the acute Hungarian situation developed primarily out of serious errors made by the Soviet and Hungarian Communists with American-paid emissaries and other reactionaries playing decisive roles as provocateurs of counter-revolutionary action. The remaining practical difference is as to whether or not the intervention of Soviet troops on November 4th was necessary and justified. But here also, I am sure the mass of our party membership has arrived at the conclusion shared by Communists all over the world that however deplorable the situation was in Hungary, it was imperative for the Soviet Union to take the action it did in order to prevent the development of a most dangerous fascist and war danger in Eastern Europe. Undoubtedly our convention will take a decisive stand along this correct general line with no large body of dissidents."

If there is now "agreement" that "reactionaries" played a decisive role of any kind, that is a new fact; but since Foster is customarily careless with facts, we have to reserve judgement. If the line-up in the party now corresponds with its description, then the Stalinist wing has won a victory without a struggle simply by manipulating its opponents into a step-by-step retreat.

THE RECORD

For the record, here is a partial chronology of Foster's bloodless triumph:

November 5: As Russian tanks shot their way back into Budapest, the *Daily Worker* editorialized:

"The action of the Soviet troops in Hungary does not advance but retards the development of socialism because socialism cannot be imposed on a country by force..."

And: "The use of force by the Soviet troops in Hungary will bring no lasting solution to that country's problems. That is why we support the Hungarian masses who sought to solve their own problems as they were settled in Poland without violence, without foreign troop intervention and without allowing the supporters of the old fascist regime to remain in power."

November 15: The counter-attack of the Stalinist wing begins, led off by James Allen. In the weeks that followed, Foster, Benjamin Davis and Eugene Dennis pour forth a typically Stalinist stream of abuse upon the Hungarian revolution. They sneer at "democracy"; they denounce the movement as "fascist"-dominated; they defend the puppet Kadar regime; they apologize for Russian intervention; they fabricate "facts" to suit their needs.

November 20: The *Daily Worker* announces a new National Committee statement on Hungary. It appears to com-

promise and straddle the key issues but actually encourages the Stalinist position. (There is no record of any opposition from the *Daily Worker* board, which had spoken up quite differently two weeks before.)

The new resolution said: "We do not seek to justify the use of Soviet troops in Hungary's internal crisis on Nov. 4. Neither do we join in the condemnation of these actions."

If the committee itself was not willing to justify Russian intervention, it strengthened those who did justify it. The resolution trotted out the bogey of an imminent danger of "fascist" rule in Hungary. But the *Daily Worker* itself, in particular its foreign editor Joe Clark, had helped to explode this claim as a fraud.

November 20—December 20: The *Daily Worker* treads on eggshells. It dutifully prints canned reports on Hungary from Moscow and from Kadar. But at the same time, it reports a wave of strikes, the formation of workers councils, demonstrations—all with a certain objectivity. Joe Clark on December 17 writes: "Perhaps the ultimate solution of the Hungarian crisis will depend on a recognition of the Workers Councils as the most vital force in that shattered land."

End of December: The National Committee meets. The *Daily Worker* begins to toe a new line. The struggles of the Hungarian masses disappear from its pages; now, only official and uncritical news.

BACK TO THE DEPTHS

One of those who is relieved of an annoying strain as he reverts quickly to his old self is columnist George Morris; he wastes little time in churning out the standard stuff.

On January 11: "...the events in Hungary also proved that the socialist world isn't lulled and will not permit the re-entry of reaction in any form." He is

not at all disturbed over the fact that there is no democracy "in any form" in Hungary.

On January 18 he reaches not new depths but the usual depths of Stalinistic slander. His column is titled: "Hungarian Runaways Not So Popular in Unions."

He explains why unionists are not donating to Hungarian relief: "...the reports now breaking in the press of the anti-Semitism rife in the camps of the 'freedom fighters' are not likely to increase collections for Hungarian refugees." The Hungarians are just a bunch of anti-Semites, as Morris tells it, but that's not all; they are, he assures us, scabs as well:

"These are not the historic newcomers," he concludes, "who brought progress to America and built it. Many of the post-war crop (although by no means all) are reactionary refugees from socialism, some of whom served under Hitler, strongly poisoned by anti-Semitism and who see their future only in an anti-Soviet war. Employers have sought these elements as useful against unionism and as lickspittles. Some voices have been raised on their usefulness in armed operations against socialist countries. At least a sizable number of the Hungarian refugees are the latest reinforcement for this 'foreign legion' against Communism."

ANTI-SEMITISM: 2 VIEWS

Morris drools whatever passes through his mind as long as it can denigrate the Hungarians. What does it matter that most of the refugees are youth; that they reached maturity under Stalinism; that in Hungary many were Communists? It doesn't matter. Morris has to find a way to do a job. Presto! They have become agents of Hitler!

The *Daily Worker* takes refuge in two different methods of handling anti-Semitism—one for Hungary and quite another for Czechoslovakia.

On January 13, the *Worker* reports from Czechoslovakia under the head "Old and New Exist Side by Side as Socialism Grows." Author George Lohr talks of "another friend, one of the most sincere and devoted Communists"; he is serious and good and he "fights against opportunists." Alas, he is not perfect for he has two weaknesses: "One of them,

he tries to rationalize—his unwillingness to let his wife go to work. The other is a latent anti-Semitism, arising strangely enough from a hatred of former bosses. He has never known a Jewish fellow worker but only Jewish employers, mostly the former owners of the textile mills in this city."

Here is a man who can be anti-Semitic and also a good Communist.

Thus, when anti-Semitism is discovered in Czechoslovakia the writer does not justify it but he tries to understand it.

But how different for Hungary! George Morris in his own crude way uses reports of anti-Semitic incidents to brand refugees from Stalinist-controlled Hungary as anti-union. It is not his personal quirk.

On January 11, the *Daily Worker* reprints reports of several anti-Semitic incidents in Hungarian refugee camps; "And in the midst of all the hullabaloo about the 'freedom fighters' and their escape to Austria, we find the anti-Semites carrying on their dirty work unabated."

On January 17 an editorial discussing anti-Semitism, entitled "Protect the Refugees," cautions against "the glorification of the Hungarian refugees en masse" and adds: "...we have never nurtured illusions about efforts of Hungarian reaction to make political capital out of the nation's crisis..."

SELECTIVE STORIES

Any decent-minded person, not to mention any socialist, will protest against every manifestation of anti-Semitism from whatever source and will do what he can to end it. We notice, however, how differently the *Daily Worker* reacts to anti-Semitism for Hungary and for Czechoslovakia. The Stalinists demand that the Hungarian revolution be defamed. The *Daily Worker* gags at the job; but finds it necessary to print carefully selective stories on Hungary.

In Hungary, Regional Workers Councils have been illegalized; the Kadar government has executed leaders of the opposition and those whom it accuses of being revolutionary leaders, in drum-head courts; it has passed laws that make it possible to shoot strikers; it continues dictatorship; it refuses democratic rights to critics. But the *Daily Worker* has ceased to record such facts. In the old Stalinist days, it would have proudly trumpeted apologies for Russia; those days are gone. Now, it shamefully turns away from the grim facts of Stalinist dictatorship and edits the news with discretion. Is that the dessicated fruit of the great fight for independence? It will satisfy no one—in the Communist Party or outside.

Anti-Semitism in Poland and Hungary Watch Out for Smears Against the Anti-Stalinist Revolution

By HAL DRAPER

All socialists and all democrats have recent reason to be concerned with the reports of rising anti-Semitism in Hungary and Poland, the two countries where the popular struggle against Stalinism has reached new heights. Is it true? From which direction does it come: from the Stalinist forces at bay, or from the revolutionary democratic opposition?

One of the main lines of Stalinist apologetics for the Hungarian massacre is the smear that the revolutionaries are shot through with anti-Semitism. It is used as part and parcel of the Stalinist smear that "fascists" carried out the great Hungarian Revolution. Reports from Poland are also being used in some quarters to smear the anti-Stalinist mass movement. If for no other reason, these claims and reports must therefore be approached with something less than credulity.

One of the strong points which these rumors start with, in advance of any investigation, is the sad fact that there is clear basis to believe they could be true. Everybody knows that anti-Semitism has historically and traditionally been strong in the Polish and Hungarian populations.

In addition, the victory of Stalinism introduced a special element in both these countries. Precisely in order to establish an alienated satellite bureaucracy which was most abjectly dependent on Russian guns rather than popular support, and counting precisely on anti-

Semitic currents, the Russians installed a large number of Stalinist hatchetmen of Jewish descent as their quislings in the East European satrapies. Typical was the rôle of Jakub Berman and Hilary Mine in Poland, and Rakosi and Gero in Hungary.

It is only an apparent paradox that it was the virulently anti-Semitic minds of Stalin and his henchmen that worked out this vicious scheme; they counted on evoking anti-Semitism to keep the creatures dependent on the outside masters. This extended also to the composition of the secret police cadres.

Certainly no one can rule out the incidence of anti-Semitic ideas here or there when a whole nation, with all of its variety, goes on the barricades against a foreign foe, as Hungary did. For that matter, no one has denied there could be a Horthyite here or there among the freedom fighters, or any other political animal. But it has been not too difficult to maintain perspective on this for Hun-

gary: a genuine revolution raises all sorts of scum from the depths as the waters churn, but the scum is not the revolution.

All that is general prologue. What evidence is there for any hard conclusions? Take Hungary first.

There have been several very strong attestations from Hungarian freedom fighters that the revolutionaries' fight was not tainted by anti-Semitic manifestations, in spite of whatever reasons one may have to expect it. (For one such, see *LA* Dec. 17, p. 5.)

AUTHORITATIVE EVIDENCE

Very strong testimony was published in the London *Jewish Chronicle* (Dec. 7), one of Europe's most authoritative Jewish organs, by the well-known Hungarian Jewish writer George Mikes. He was himself in Hungary during the first days of the revolution and then interviewed hundreds of Hungarian refugees. He writes that he questioned and cross-questioned them thoroughly, and all of them, Jews and non-Jews, categorically denied that there had been any acts of anti-Semitism; they declared that even the word Jew was not heard during the Hungarian Revolution.

Mikes explains the absence of anti-Semitic manifestations (in view of our

(Continued on page 4)