

The CP Faction Fight

By Harry Ring

On Feb. 9-12, the Communist Party of the U.S. will meet in convention. The gathering will be dominated by a faction fight between the Gates and Foster tendencies.

The Khrushchev revelations at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union last year not only produced a crisis in the ranks of the American CP, but served to end a decade of uneasy "coexistence" between the Party's Nat'l Committee and its National Chairman, William Z. Foster. When Earl Browder was booted out in 1946, Foster assumed the titular leadership of the party but the decisive control rested with those who had previously comprised Browder's machine in the leadership. Supported by a few old-time associates, Foster remained in conflict with the rest of the committee for full control of the party's completely bureaucratized apparatus.

With the post-20th Congress developments, these power-seeking cliques emerged before the membership as the Gates and Foster tendencies. Meanwhile, many in the ranks, now recognizing that Stalinism and Leninism were differing and conflicting conceptions, were trying to find the way back to the authentic Leninism as the solution to the Party crisis.

Those members seeking a return to Leninist criteria were put in the position of having to determine if either of the leadership could advance the party in the direction of Leninism.

BOTH FEAR RANKS

Both Foster and Gates revealed the indelible stamp of long years of Stalinist politics. Neither was willing to make a full and honest appraisal of the past. Neither would clearly spell out the political platform on which he stood. Neither tendency dared entrust resolution of the party crisis to democratic process in the organization.

Through the mechanics of presenting a compromise draft resolution for the convention, both tendencies sought to avoid having the disputed question settled by the democratic decision of the membership. They feared that such a precedent would encourage the formation of independent groupings in the ranks advancing platforms opposed to that of both factions in the leadership.

The Gates tendency, with control of the Daily Worker, was the first to appear before the membership. It gave CP ranks

the initial impression of throwing off past submission to the Kremlin. The Daily Worker expressed shock at the revelations of Stalin's crimes. It apologized for its defense of these crimes, pledging that henceforth it would speak out unequivocally against such monstrous deeds as frame-up trials and persecution of the Jewish people.

The Daily Worker hailed the ascendancy of Gomulka to power in Poland and came to deplore Kremlin intervention in Hungary. It declared for an end to bureaucratic misrule in the CP although it was helping to prop it up. Thus, the Gates faction sought to recommend itself to the party ranks for such Leninist attributes as independent thinking, speaking the truth and supporting the

democratic rights of the membership.

In his bid for power, Foster employed a different strategy. It consisted essentially of letting the adversary get out on a limb, then trying to saw the limb off. For a month after the Khrushchev revelations, while the party was in a seething turmoil and his factional opponents were taking a stand, Foster maintained a public silence.

Finally, in the March 16 Daily Worker, he emerged to declare: "Our task is neither to rush indignantly to the defense of Stalin nor to tear him to political shreds, as some in our ranks are inclined to do."

Foster was able to win the support of many of those members who sought a road back to

Lenin. He did so in large measure not because he campaigned for a program, but because the Gates faction was rapidly demonstrating that whatever it had to offer on the side of party democracy was outweighed by its steady rightward evolution. The Gates proposal for transforming the CP into a Browder-type "political association" was recognized by worker-militants as liquidating any vestige of the Leninist concept of a revolutionary party. His increasingly conciliatory attitude toward the Social Democracy and the union bureaucracy clearly revealed a high sensitivity to the pressure of capitalist public opinion.

Gates lost further ground when it became apparent that he was

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Right Wing Socialist Groups Unified in N. Y. Convention

By Myra Tanner Weiss

JAN. 23 — The Socialist Party and part of the Social Democratic Federation merged into one organization at a national convention held in New York City Jan. 18 and 19. The Jewish Socialist Verband, largest section of the SDF, remained outside of the unification. In addition, the Central Committee of the New York City SDF voted 41-9 in opposition to the merger with the SP and announced that the convention was "irregular, unauthorized and invalid."

The convention was attended by fewer than a hundred who claimed delegate's status, with the SDF bringing to the SP a national membership of less than

a hundred. The new organization, until the next regularly scheduled convention, will be called the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation.

GAITSKELL ABSENT

Unlike the ultra-conservative right wingers in the SDF who snubbed the unity convention, the leadership of the small 'left-wing' in the Socialist Party that had also opposed the merger capitulated, entered the unity convention, even compromising its last and final demand, that the new organization call itself the Socialist Party.

Hugh Gaitskell, Chairman of the British Labor Party, had been scheduled to address the

convention. However, the cabinet crisis of England's imperialist government required that Gaitskell, as head of her majesty's official opposition party, return in haste for consultations with the queen of the British empire.

Still, the convention was not left without its dignitaries. The mayor of Milwaukee, Frank Zeidler, was there to deliver the keynote address. The mayor was also elected National Chairman of the new organization with Darlington Hoopes and Louis Goldberg as Vice Chairmen.

In a statement issued by the Unity Convention, the merger is described as "primarily the result of our turbulent era — profoundly changed social, economic and international developments — just as the original split between the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Federation itself grew out of events of twenty years ago. . . events and circumstances have made unity between the SP and the SDF not only possible but imperative."

REAL STORY OF SPLIT

This was apparently as close as the convention could come to an explanation of the "historic significance" of the merger. The "events of twenty years ago" that led to the split actually consisted of an upsurge of the American working class that

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State Department "Socialism"

The following is an excerpt from the "Memorandum of Understanding" arrived at between the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Federation prior to their Jan. 18-19 unity convention in New York:

"[The point program] must not be based on the illusion that peace can be achieved by appeasement of the Communist imperialism that threatens the world's peace and freedom. . . We realize that until universal, enforceable disarmament can be achieved, the free world and its democratically established military agencies must be constantly on guard against the military drive of the Communist dictators."

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no more capable of resisting Foster's Kremlin-type pressure than of resisting the pressure of U.S. imperialism. After an initial posture of independence on Hungary, he caved in with a mumbled "qualified" support of the second treacherous invasion. Declared opponents of capital punishment, the DW editors have yet to express themselves on the Kadar decree invoking the death penalty for strikers.

The pledge to speak out against any further manifestation of Soviet anti-Semitism proved equally hollow. The Daily Worker failed to print a line of the recent interview of the Canadian CP leader, J. B. Salzberg, with Khrushchev where Stalin's heir insisted that the Soviet Jews were doing fine, that even his son was married to one, and that the only problem was that Jews didn't clean their streets, were continually starting synagogues and in general weren't very reliable citizens.

In opposition to Gates' program and record, Foster offers one thing; the preservation of the CP as a party and continued lip service to Marxism-Leninism. But tied in the Foster package deal is the old Stalinism. Criticism is in order only on sanction from the Kremlin. The Kremlin vilification of the Hungarian political revolution as a fascist uprising is to be accepted without question. A critic of the Kremlin, as in the old days, is automatically "anti-Soviet."

WHERE FOSTER IS SOFT

The distinguishing characteristic of Foster's anti-Leninist politics is not only his defense of the Kremlin bureaucracy against the Soviet-orbit working class. Basic to his Stalinist line is a program favoring collaboration with the capitalist class.

For Foster, the Workers Councils that sprang up in Hungary were fascist agencies to be crushed by Kremlin tanks. For the same Foster, the capitalist Democratic Party in this country is an instrument for social progress. He even sees "important sections of the bourgeoisie and even of monopoly itself" as capable of being drawn into an effective peace movement. (Political Affairs, Oct. 1955).

In this perspective of political class collaboration, Foster is, of course, in full accord with the Gates faction. It is this joint devotion to class-collaboration and joint opposition to an authentic socialist program of class struggle that makes it impossible for either Gates or Foster to lead the ranks of the Communist Party back to Lenin.