

# What Kind of Independence Did CP Convention Achieve?

By A. B. MAGIL

LET'S call them Harry, Bill and Jack. They're all friends of mine and I've known them for years. Harry thought the Communist Party convention marked a step forward, but not a big enough step. To him the all-important question was changing the name and form of the Party to some kind of socialist political action association. The convention opposed this, though it left the door open to further "constructive exploration and discussion of the subject."

Harry doesn't know whether he'll remain in the Party. He points out that so many good people have left or are leaving because "the convention didn't go far enough." He admits that by leaving, these people are making it more difficult to implement the changes voted by the convention, let alone go further. He also admits that these individuals, who were among the strongest critics of concepts of "monolithic unity" and the anti-democratic practices that formerly prevailed in the Party, are insisting on their own kind of "monolithic unity" and refusing to accept the verdict of the majority of the members.

Bill has a different view of the convention. He expresses great satisfaction that the delegates refused to "convert the Party into an amorphous, catch-all political association." That for him is everything. He likes the convention for what it didn't do.

Jack thinks the main positive result of the convention was that "it defeated both extremes: left sectarianism and right-wing revisionism."

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I AGREE in part and disagree in part with all three of my friends. I too would have liked the convention to have gone further in certain respects than it did. At the same time I'm happy it didn't go so far as to break with or weaken basic Marxist principles. And it's true that extremes on both the "Left" and "Right" were rejected.

But in my opinion all this misses the heart of what the convention achieved. Leaving Marxist principles unimpaired and defeating both extremes might have meant that the Communist Party remained where it was a year ago. But the fact is that even before the convention the Party no longer was what it had been.

Events of the past year, especially revelations of anti-socialist distortions and crimes in the socialist countries, and many months of discussion of the Party's own errors had changed the outlook of most American Communists.

The convention registered this changed outlook and gave it precise form in the decisions it adopted. The delegates didn't defeat both extremes by standing still, but by moving forward. They didn't merely refuse to weaken Marxist principles; they strengthened and revitalized them by acting to remove the rust of dogmatism and proposing to apply those principles with a bold fresh eye to the American scene.

Thus, the majority of the delegates, though they differed with each other on many questions, agreed that the road projected in the Party's main draft resolution, was, with certain amendments, the road they wished to follow.

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sensed that something new and different had happened, but they vulgarized it. "U.S. Reds Vote to End Control by Soviet" was the New York Times headline (Feb. 13). "Reds in U. S. Vote to Cast Off Moscow" was the way the Herald Tribune put it.

But the American Communists were not controlled by the Soviet Union and therefore couldn't end that which didn't exist. What they cast off was not "Moscow," but their self-imposed ideological dependence, their tendency to assume that the views of other Communist Parties, especially that of the Soviet Union, were necessarily more authoritative, more likely to be true than their own views.

The convention voted an independent position in a resolution which stated:

"International working-class solidarity includes the right to friendly criticism of brother parties or the actions of socialist governments.

"At the same time it requires that such criticism shall be within the framework of recognition that the fundamental conflict of all peoples is with the forces of imperialism."

It might be added that a truly independent position includes not only the right to disagree, but the right to agree. Within the framework of independence, what the attitude toward the Soviet and other Communist parties will be may be gleaned from the report to the convention by Max Weiss in behalf of the Resolutions Subcommittee on theory. He said the majority of the committee was of the opinion that the Party "while paying the closest attention to the valued opinions of other parties, especially the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," must "decide for itself the

interpretation of Marxist-Leninist principles."

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IT WAS around the question of interpreting Marxist-Leninist principles that one of the sharpest debates of the convention took place. Some feared that the wording of the draft resolution: "... Marxist-Leninist principles as interpreted by the Communist Party of our country," cast doubt on the validity of those principles.

Others believed it essential to make clear that the American Party would do its own interpreting of the principles it was proposing to apply to American conditions. As finally amended and overwhelmingly adopted, this passage in the main resolution (also incorporated in the preamble of the Party's new constitution) reads:

"The Communist Party bases its theory generally on the cultural heritage of mankind, and particularly on the principles of scientific socialism developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin.

"These principles the Communist Party of the U. S. interprets and applies, and strives to develop further in accordance with the requirements of the American class struggle and democratic traditions."

In a deeper sense the independence that the convention affirmed was independence from dogma, whether the dogma emanates from Moscow, Belgrade, Paris, Peking or New York.

But the convention also made clear that independence from dogma does not and must not mean independence from the truths of scientific socialism—both those discovered in the past and those still to be ascertained in the future.

(This is the first of a series on the Communist convention.)

## ECONOMIST EXAMINES SOURCES OF DEPRESSION

Agriculture in an Industrial Economy: The Agrarian Crisis by Troy J. Cauley, Bookman Associates, New York, \$4.

By ERIK BERT

IT IS unusual to find an academic work urging worker-farmer political solidarity. Prof. Troy Cauley does that in his "Agriculture in an Industrial Economy." He uses a statement by Walter Reuther favoring price supports and other farm demands as the background to his own plea.

Reuther's statement, Cauley says, "sets forth principles upon which farmers could well join political forces with organized labor. American farmers and their alleged leaders would do well to rally to their support.

"If they do so, there is a good prospect for more effective political action to promote the general welfare, including that of farmers, then we have ever had before."

For this advice he deserves sincere thanks.

The book offers an analysis of the sources of depression in our economy, the part that agriculture plays in our economic instability, and the remedial measures that should be taken.

The "basic cause" of the "recurring instability of our economy," Cauley holds, lies in the unequal distribution of income among our

people. "Most people get relatively small incomes; a few people get very large incomes; and an intermediate number get middle-sized incomes." The consequence is that the "mass of people do not consistently acquire sufficient purchasing power to enable them to buy the output of our mass production industries."

The 'farm problem' consists, he says, in the "extreme fluctuation of farmers' purchasing power." This, he suggests, can be resolved, in part by enactment of the Brannan Plan which would substitute direct money payments to farmers for the present price support system. This would make possible lower farm prices to the consumer without depriving the farmer of aid. Since, however, there is no chance of the adoption of the Brannan Plan now, Cauley supports the price support programs with the Eisenhower-Benson administration has been trying to scuttle.

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THOUGH space limitations make impossible an adequate discussion of some major positions taken by Cauley they should be challenged, if only by enumeration.

1. "The need for public measures to prevent mass unemployment" will not reach "large proportions" until "wars and rumors of wars have ceased for a considerable period of time." Cauley offers no evidence to disprove the argument  
(Continued on Page 14)