

French C.P. Holds Congress...

REVISIONISM LAYS ITS CARDS ON THE TABLE

"We are not the party of the raised fist. We are the party of the outstretched hand, the party of unity. In any case, the raised fist is not a French tradition. I don't think people ought to raise their fists. We stretch out our hands to Christians, to socialists, also to Gaullists when it's a question of defending the national interest."
(Georges Marchais, 2/7/76)

In the midst of intensifying class struggle that threatens to change the political geography of Europe, the French Communist Party held its 22nd Congress on February 2. European capitalism is in crisis. In France 33% of productive capacity lies idle. There is massive unemployment and continuing inflationary spiral. Foreign-based corporations control 25% of French industry and France's foreign debt continues to mount.

In both Italy and France these conditions have brought the Communist parties of these two countries to the brink of power. The recent French Congress gives a good indication of what we can expect from this devel-



opment. The essence of this Congress was the deletion of the concept of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" from the Party Program. To quote the General Secretary of the CPF, Georges Marchais, in his presentation of the Draft Resolution to the Congress:

"The power that will lead to the socialist transformation of society will be the power of the working class and of the other categories of the working people, manual and intellectual, from town and countryside... that is, the great majority of the people.

"The power will be derived from, and act according to, wishes freely expressed by universal suffrage, and will undertake the extensive possible democratization of the economic, social, and political life of the country. Its duty will be to respect—and to make respected—the democratic choices of the people.

"Contrary to all this, 'dictatorship' automatically evokes the fascist regimes of Hitler, Mussolini, Salazar, and Franco; that is, the very negation of democracy. This is not what we want. As for 'proletariat,' it evokes today the kernel, the heart of the working class. Even if its role is essential, it does not constitute the totality of the working class, even less the totality of the laboring masses... and the socialist power we envision emanates from them.

"Thus it is evident that we cannot describe as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' what we are proposing to the workers, to our people."

OPENLY BREAKS WITH MARXISM-LENINISM

Thus M. Marchais breaks with every revolutionary tradition of the working class, with the sum total of revolutionary wisdom gained by the working class at incredible cost in countless struggles and sacrifices, with Marxism-Leninism—once and for all. Here we have in sharp relief the essence of revisionism as an ideology: *the attempt to make socialism and revolution acceptable to the bourgeoisie.*

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As Marx and Lenin taught, and as the experience of the class struggle from the Paris Commune to Chile confirms, in the final analysis the question of power for the working class is the question of whether or not the working class sweeps away the capitalist state apparatus and builds its own form of state power. Marchais, Berlinguer and Co. have in so many words told the bourgeoisie, "Don't worry, we will not tamper with your state and with your property rights." The example of Chile is lost on them; or rather their response to the Chilean experience is to offer the bourgeoisie a deal "they can't refuse," to heap guarantee upon guarantee of their real harmlessness to capital.

NATIONAL CHAUVINISM PERVADES CONGRESS

Another way in which revisionism adopts the standpoint of the bourgeoisie is in its adapting Marxism-Leninism to nationalism. The French party has cleverly manipulated anti-US and anti-NATO sentiment, as well as historical anti-German feelings of many French—aggravated in the recent period by economic competition between the two countries, and by the German imperialists' success at utilizing the Common Market to their own advantage.

Said Marchais at the Congress, "The destiny of our peasants is decided in Brussels [the seat of the Common Market], that of our currency in Washington, the future of our country will, if our people don't take action, be stopped short tomorrow in Luxembourg [NATO headquarters], or rather Bonn, by the headquarters of the reactionary forces and the multi-national trusts of Atlantic Europe."

Further, "The politics of Giscard d'Estaing [the current President of France] which consist of making France a doormat for West Germany, are criminal; any Frenchman that cares about the interests of the nation cannot and should not accept them. It is a veritable national betrayal..."

Rather than appeal to the interests of the international working class against NATO and the Common Market, Marchais tells the French bourgeoisie: We will do a better job of defending your interests vis a vis the other imperialist powers than your own chosen representatives.

The significance of the French Congress lies not in the abandonment of Marxism-Leninism, for that occurred long ago, but rather in now giving up not only the substance but the trappings of revolutionary working class politics. The French party is joining the Italian party in bringing their rhetoric more in harmony with their practice.

By so doing the PCF has sharpened the international crisis of revisionism. Revisionism's opportunist essence is now drawn into sharper relief. This is a source of great embarrassment to the Big Daddy of modern opportunism, the CPSU. Marchais' frank rejection of proletarian dictatorship contradicts the CPSU's attempt to generate a left cover for international revisionism.

At first Pravda censored its reports of Marchais speeches; later it carried high-level articles warning of "social-democratization" of the western communist parties and of "anti-Sovietism." This does not bother the French "communists," who are not at all averse to putting as much distance as possible between themselves and their mentors in Moscow in the public eye.

Simply put, the chickens are coming home to roost for the CPSU. The Soviets would like to forget that twenty years ago they themselves repudiated the dictatorship of the proletariat at the infamous 20th Congress. The Soviet revisionists eagerly tutored the European parties in the lessons of revisionism and now when these parties apply what they have learned a little too eagerly, it is causing their mentors to squirm. Revisionism, as a sham Marxism, must maintain a careful balance between left phrases and right policies, and in this respect the French and Italians are proving to be poor students.

IMPERIALISTS STILL FEAR FRENCH CP'S RISE

If the French and Italian revisionists are made of such pale stuff, why are Ford, Kissinger and the rest of the US imperialists so uptight? As *Time* magazine put it on March 15, "A strong case can be made that there are unacceptable risks to the West in allowing the Communists to come to power."

What are these "unacceptable risks"? First of all, an al-

ready seriously weakened NATO would be further undermined. While the Italian CP has expressed a willingness to remain within NATO, and the PCF is putting distance between itself and Moscow, nevertheless these folks are still not welcome in the war room at Brussels. For all their political tameness, they cannot be counted on to promote aggressive military mobilization and "defense" against the USSR.

But more centrally, the bourgeoisie fears not so much the revisionists as the social forces that their coming to power would unleash. The working classes of Italy and France would insist that the Popular Front governments in which the communist parties would participate deliver on their promises. In spite of the intentions of the revisionists themselves, such a situation could generate a revolutionary threat.

It is the popular base of the revisionists, more than the revisionists themselves, that throws fear into capitalists both in Europe and in the US. The broadening of support for the left and the growth of mass militancy are definite harbingers of an approaching revolutionary situation.

While this is understandably threatening to the bourgeoisie, as Marxist-Leninists we realize that unless a serious revolutionary leadership, a genuine Marxist-Leninist party, emerges, the coming revolutionary crisis will result in defeat and demoralization for the working class.

Part of the significance of the French Congress is that, by further exposing revisionism, they are providing Marxist-Leninists with new opportunities. The masses are being increasingly drawn into political life, and the revisionists are doing their best to draw clear lines of demarcation between themselves and revolutionary politics—they are exposing themselves with a vengeance, and the working classes of France and Italy, with their long and rich traditions of Marxism, will come to understand this—particularly their advanced sections. Thus, the perspectives for the construction of an authentic vanguard party of the proletariat are rendered more favorable.



The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first time in history the working class seized state power. Today's revisionist French Communist Party has publicly abandoned this revolutionary tradition.

WHAT ARE THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS?

There appears to be little sign of a break from within the ranks of the PCF. Out of 22,705 delegates in 98 "federation" (the CPF's districts) conferences preparatory to the Congress, only 12 voted against the final draft resolution, with 85 abstaining. Undoubtedly, there was more real opposition than these figures reveal—but it could not have been substantial. The most lively debate during the discussion period prior to the Congress came around a paragraph in the Draft on "morality," condemning moral "perversions," etc.

But outside the PCF the picture is unfortunately not very promising either. The largest anti-revisionist organizations in France are thoroughly dogmatic and sectarian, and are unable to put forward a serious alternative to the CPF.

A national conference of several thousand militants representing the clandestine PCMLF (which publishes *L'Humanite Rouge*) was held in Paris February 14, and a call was launched for "unity of Marxist-Leninists" (the PCMLF had issued such calls in July and September—continued on page 21)

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ber of 1975 as well). A delegation of the other large anti-revisionist organization, the PCRML, attended, but made it clear unity is not on the immediate agenda. This is probably just as well, for it would be unity around dogmatism, not Marxism-Leninism.

For example, the PCMLF (which, by the way, is the organization put forward by the October League (ML) here in the US as the leading force of French Marxist-Leninists) wants to explore the possibility of a "historical compromise" between Marxist-Leninists and other political forces "against the imminent invasion of Russian social-imperialism."

Such a political line, no matter what the subjective intentions of those that advance it, can only lead to objective unity-in-action with US imperialism and its lackeys in France. One is reminded of the insane behavior of certain ultra-left forces in Portugal recently, who united with outright fascists to sack Communist Party headquarters!

Undoubtedly, there are authentic Marxist-Leninist forces in France who understand the disastrous character of this nonsense, and who are actively involved in developing an authentically revolutionary current within the workers' movement. But unfortunately little information is available regarding their work.

By providing an object lesson in how *not* to make a revolution, the PCF has rendered a certain service to Marxist-Leninists. Here in the US a much weaker revisionist party, the CPUSA, preaches an Americanized brand of "historical compromise" and the peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. The French experience ought to strengthen our resolve to out-organize these fakers, so that when the revolutionary crisis matures here they will be on the sidelines where they belong. If they're on stage center we are in trouble!