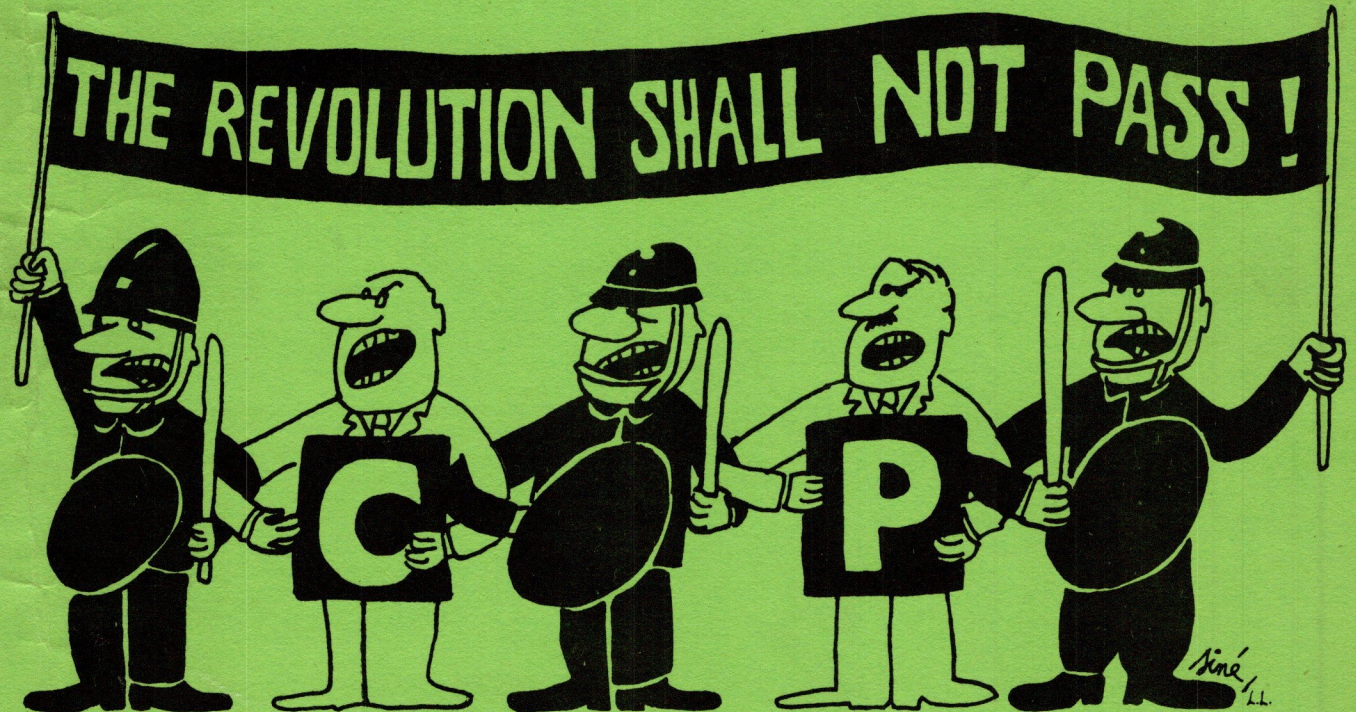


THE COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THE WEST

Articles From
Lutte Ouvriere

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST DISCUSSION PAMPHLET

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INTRODUCTION

The articles printed in this collection first appeared in **Class Struggle**, the magazine published in French and English by the French Trotskyist group Lutte Ouvriere. They provide information on one of the important questions facing the revolutionary movement today—the nature of the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries.

French revolutionary socialists, of course, have an immediate and particular interest in this question. In their political work every day, especially in the union (in France the main union federation, the CGT, is controlled by the Communist Party), they face constant intimidation from the CP bureaucracy. Militants in the CGT will be instantly expelled if they are exposed as Trotskyists. Furthermore, at virtually every point the CGT and CP act to hold back the struggles of French workers—taking the leadership of mass workers' actions only when they must do so to prevent the struggle from escaping their control.

The underlying assumption in these articles—that the Communist Parties are not revolutionary socialist parties aiming to lead the working class to power—is taken for granted today among all tendencies on the revolutionary left. The early revolutionary Communist Parties of the Third International, which were formed under the political impact of the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary upheaval which swept across Europe and Asia in its wake, were destroyed under the influence of the Stalinist counterrevolution in Russia. From the 1930s on, the Communist Parties have consistently opposed working class democracy. In some cases, as in Spain in the '30s, they actively crushed the working class to help keep a liberal Popular Front capitalist regime in power. In the late 1940s in Eastern Europe, where capitalist relations had collapsed, the Communist Parties under the domination of Moscow served as agents, not for the socialist revolution but for the extension of Stalinism. Much more recently, the Communist Party in Chile maintained an alliance with the Popular Unity government in Chile, which promised the workers a "Chilean Road to Socialism" but instead physically and politically disarmed them and paved the way for a brutal military dictatorship.

Under the impact of these events, and especially because of the incredibly conservative strategies of the Communist Parties in most capitalist countries in the last 15-20 years—strategies which have often placed the CP to the right of some social-democratic labor bureaucrats—many revolutionary socialists have concluded that the Communist Parties have become, themselves, social democratic parties. This view is maintained by the comrades of Lutte Ouvriere and is put forward in the articles reprinted here. This view, very quickly stated, is that the Communist Parties today stand for the preserving of the rotten, decaying capitalist system.

No one would deny that, at least on the surface, there is some evidence for such a view. In the case of Italy, for example, it seems that the only places where things haven't completely collapsed is in the cities under

Communist Party municipal administrations! In the words of one factory owner in Bologna, Italy, "Since I joined the Communist Party, I haven't had any strikes."

The International Socialists in the United States, however, do not share this view. We believe that it is theoretically inadequate, and does not prepare the revolutionary movement to deal effectively with the politics of the Communist Parties in the new period of crisis and upheaval developing in the capitalist world.

We do not believe that the Communist Parties in France, Italy, Portugal, the United States, and so on are fundamentally tied to the interests of their own capitalist, imperialist ruling classes. Their interests do not depend on maintaining capitalist property relations and political rule in their own countries, or on a world scale.

It is, of course, true that the Communist Parties are willing to make all kinds of alliances with capitalist ruling classes for many purposes: to support the foreign policy needs of the Soviet Union (or in a few cases, China); to increase their own political respectability or electoral position; or, and most especially, to join with the capitalists in crushing any threat of an independent revolutionary working class struggle for socialism.

The class loyalties of the Communist Parties, however, are not to capitalism but to the bureaucratic collectivist social system that exists in Russia and China. A given Communist Party, while supporting this system, may be loyal to either the Russian or Chinese bureaucratic ruling classes, or for that matter independent of both. For the Communist Party apparatus, at least, class loyalty is very clear: the CP bureaucracy consciously identifies "socialism" with its own control of society. For "models of progressive social change," it looks to societies which are already run by a similar bureaucratic elite. Its long-term goal is to organize a social base for a bureaucratic revolution, an alternative to capitalism but one in which there is not workers' control, no democracy, no political freedom—but a nationalized economy controlled from above. Its loyalty, in short, is neither to capitalism or socialism, but Stalinism—with or without Stalin.

Obviously, no Communist Party in the West today—with the possible, and tentative exception of Portugal—is prepared to launch anything like an immediate struggle in a capitalist world now entering the greatest world crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The revolutionary movement faces the challenge of organizing rank and file workers' struggles and new revolutionary parties that can lead a struggle for socialism. In this struggle we will have to face both the capitalist rulers and the anti-working class alternative of Stalinism. Theories of the Communist Parties based on a 25-year period of capitalist prosperity, when no social transformation was possible in the industrialized capitalist countries, are at best inadequate to the world of today.

This and other points of view will be fully developed in the discussion which the IS is now beginning on the Communist Parties. The information in these articles should help us prepare for this discussion.

—IS Educational Department

ON THE DOUBLE NATURE

OF THE MASS "STALINIST PARTIES"

The electoral agitation of the past months again raises a problem which has preoccupied all kinds of political commentators for several years - that is, the evolution of the French Communist Party. It is certainly a long time since the Communist Party gave rise to legends such as "the bolchevik with a knife between his teeth" : The bourgeoisie no longer fears it as the Party of the opposing class. Yet, although it is by far the most important Party, as much because of its numerical importance as because of its implantation, it is kept outside of the basic workings of parliamentary democracy.

In comparing the French C.P. with the S.F.I.O., Guy Mollet said, a few years ago, that the C.P. was not further to the left of his party but further East.

These links with Moscow, which constitute the main feature of each C.P. in the eyes of its bourgeoisie, do not, however, seem to be made of everlasting materials. And no one can say the C.P. will always remain the fifth wheel of the carriage of parliamentary government, or at least its spare-wheel, sometimes useful, but usually a superfluous obstruction. The question of the evolution of the French Communist Party is not an isolated one: it is that of all Stalinist Parties. During the last quarter of a century, the links of several Communist Parties with the Soviet bureaucracy were put under severe trial. Sometimes those links collapsed - as in the cases of the Yugoslav Communist Party, the Chinese Communist Party, the Albanian Communist Party, to mention the most famous - and nearly everywhere else they slackened: the phenomenon of polycentrism existed long before the word which designates it. An exception at first, it is now the rule.

It is convenient and perfectly justified in certain respects to call, as is customary, a "Stalinist Party", any Party which organises its members on the basis of a certain ideology (if one can really speak of a Stalinist "ideology"), a certain political line, certain methods, and which is, and has been in the past, more or less firmly bound to the Kremlin bureaucracy. In particular, this designation makes it possible to distinguish them from the "workers" Parties directly tied to the bourgeoisie as, for example, the Social-Democratic Parties ; it makes it possible to remember the peculiar character-

istics of the C.Ps.

Nevertheless, a label emphasising the past or present dependence of these parties on the Stalinist bureaucracy and the mark left by this dependence on their political and organisational methods, completely overlooks the nature of the relations between these Parties and the masses of their own country, and the relations they maintain with one another. And precisely their ties to the Moscow bureaucracy is far from summing up all that is decisive in their nature.

The Russian C.P. is the only Stalinist Party which is unquestionably the Party of the Stalinist bureaucracy, for it has a real social base in the bureaucratic stratum. It lives off the surplus value appropriated by this bureaucracy. Its antagonisms only reflect those which divide the bureaucracy itself. Its fortune is written in that of the stratum which provides its bases and which it represents politically.

As thorough as it might appear, the dependence of the national Communist Parties on the Stalinist bureaucracy has, however, a completely different nature, and a completely different meaning.

The bureaucracy is able to fashion the Communist Parties in its own image. It can and does make them organically incapable of defending a revolutionary socialist political line. It is able to turn them into apparatuses particularly effective in opposing any left-wing danger and this is the only lesson that no Stalinist organisation has ever forgotten, even after having broken with its former mentors. But for good reason it cannot provide them with the social base which determines the nature of the C.P. in Russia. Undisputably, during a whole period, some Communist Parties gained a considerable proletarian base in their respective countries, as for example the German C.P. before 1933. Their leaders could have broken with the Russian bureaucracy in order to put into practice a revolutionary political line, but they would have needed the capacity to do so, and history has proved their incapacity. Further on, we shall see the more recent evolution of the Communist Parties - the one they have followed for the last thirty years. During this period they have carried out a nationalist political line, a function of the interests of the Russian bureaucracy, a sometimes chauvinistic one, and in the best case, a reformist one (it was sometimes openly counter-revolutionary). Indeed, their growth on the basis of the success of this political line brings up problems the theoretical solution of which are not new, but the consequences of which are.

When the national Communist Party is weak, its existence depends on the support of the Russian bureaucracy, of the latter's moral indorsement and of its subsidies ; its political line is the local manifestation of the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. Freed from any political responsibility towards an

almost non-existent base, be it non-proletarian, lead by men who have made servility towards the Kremlin the highest virtue in political morality and spinelessness the criterion for recruitment, those parties are generally the most degenerate of their kind, if there is a scale of values in this domain.

The English and American parties in the Western countries, the Egyptian Party in the underdeveloped countries are typical examples. The former take advantage of the relative democracy prevailing in their countries to convince others and themselves of the necessity of their own existence, whereas those of the underdeveloped countries vegetate under the repression of regimes to which their leaders give their support (if Moscow so orders) from inside their jails. Any real political role is denied to these parties.

Things are quite different for a Communist Party with roots in the masses. The very existence of such roots reveals that one or another stratum of the nation have found a political expression in that Party. The Party is no longer a mere transmission belt for the Kremlin, it acquires a social content, its own social base. It is no longer subject only to the pressure of the Soviet bureaucracy, but also to that of its own social base. Its evolution will be determined in the end by the outcome of these two contradictory pressures. The oscillations, the zigzags of its political line reflect the tension caused within the Party by any difference between the interests of the bureaucracy on one hand, and its own base on the other hand.

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But what are the social strata that a Stalinist Party can win over? What is the social base of a Stalinist Party with mass membership? There is no one answer to this question. This base is not the same in imperialist countries and underdeveloped countries. It is not the same in a country where the Party exercises power because of the support of the Red Army, and in a country where it seizes power at the head of the agrarian masses.

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In imperialist countries, the political line of the Stalinist Parties is the same as that of the Social-Democratic parties. It gains influence on the same strata as Social-Democracy - and to the detriment of the latter.

Analysing the double nature of the Comintern parties, Trotsky saw their main internal contradiction not in the opposition between a leadership bound to the Kremlin, and a proletarian base, as some Trotskyists do, but in the opposi-

tion between the "two sources" from which they draw their support :

"As far as the ex-Commintern itself is concerned, its social nature has a double character : on one hand it lives on the subsidies on the Kremlin, and is submitted to its leadership and in that sense, the ex-communist bureaucrat is the younger and subaltern brother of the Soviet bureaucrat. On the other hand, the different apparatuses of the ex-Commintern draw their subsidies from the same sources as Social-Democracy, that is the superprofits of imperialism" (L. Trotsky, "After the Imperialist 'Peace' of Munich")

The Communist Party gains the right to take advantage of these superprofits by its growth, by "its penetration into the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie, by its installment in the state apparatus, the Unions, the parliaments, the municipalities, etc..." We are actually dealing with the same functions, with the same strata as those influenced by Social-Democracy. Thus a covert struggle to gain the support of these strata and to take over these functions opposes the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party. This struggle does not reflect the struggle of two classes : it is that of two rivals competing for the same clients. In the countries where Social-Democracy has kept a predominant influence, as in England, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries, the Communist parties did not succeed in finding roots to a significant degree.

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On the contrary, in underdeveloped countries, there is no material basis for reformism. Neither for Social-Democracy, nor for the Communist Party. Thus the social role of a mass Stalinist Party is entirely different from that in an imperialist country. Under certain conditions, in certain circumstances, the Party can find an echo in the masses. Not in the proletariat as a class but in the strata which can be made sensitive to the nationalist "bourgeois-democratic" political line imposed on the Communist Party by Moscow : The urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie.

By gaining influence on these strata, by imposing itself upon the weak local bourgeoisie as the sole representative and the principal defender of the national interests, it can take power in certain favorable circumstances.

But setting out to conquer power already implies a virtual break with the Kremlin bureaucracy, which can be imperceptible. If it is not completely opposed to the present foreign policy of the Soviet leaders. Once it has found its own social base, the Party will act no longer as a transmission belt for the Kremlin, but as a real representative of the petty-bourgeois masses of its country, and as a guardian of the interests of the national bourgeoisie. Whatever

its phraseology, it is no longer, strictly speaking, a Stalinist Party.

In any case, whether it takes place in the imperialist countries or in the underdeveloped countries, the gaining of firm roots in the masses, the conquest of a social base causes a loosening of the links with Moscow and implies in the end the perspective of a break with the Soviet bureaucracy.

In the imperialist countries, the more a Communist Party wins the right to eat out of the "trough" of Social-Democracy (to take Trotsky's expression), the less it needs the Kremlin's and the more it tends to completely take the place of traditional Social-Democracy and thus to break with the Kremlin, but on a reformist basis.

Let us remark, by the way, that the difference between the analysis of Trotsky and of some of those who claim to speak in his name is big enough. For, if one admits, as it is asserted in "The Ten Theses on Stalinism" for example, that "the double nature of these parties ... (proceeds) from their double role, proletarian by their bases in their countries, international instrument for the Soviet bureaucracy", one must admit quite logically this statement of the resolution of the IVth International's IVth Congress.

"...in the countries where the Communist Parties are the most influential in the working class, they can be led to begin to outline a revolutionary orientation in contradiction with the directives of the Kremlin, under exceptional conditions (advanced state of decay of the ruling classes) and under the pressure of powerful revolutionary mass upheaval."

In other words, under certain conditions, the contradiction can be solved in favour of one of the two antagonist terms which supposedly determine the nature of the Communist Party, on this occasion its working class base, in which case the Party is led to break its links with Moscow. If this analysis of the double nature of the Communist Party was correct, it would be the only way of conceiving of the break of a Communist Party with the Soviet bureaucracy.

It is quite consistent with this sort of reasoning to characterize as a workers' state a state at the head of which stands such a party which has broken with the bureaucracy.

The characterization of the Chinese or of the Yugoslav State as workers' states and the characterization of the nature of Stalinist parties proceed from similar analyses (assimilating the workers and the peasants) profoundly foreign to Trotsky's.

The growing resemblance between the big Western Communist Parties and Social-Democracy, owing to their growth within the same strata of the society

is finally the explanation for the polycentrism of Western parties, of the Italian in particular.

It is useful to remember that this phenomenon, today presented as a new symptom of deep transformations within the "communist" movement - transformations in which publications in the style of "Nouvel Observateur" see the break of a new dawn for the whole of the Left - was foreseen by Trotsky as logically proceeding from the double nature of Stalinist parties.

"Ten years ago, it was predicted that the theory of socialism in one country was inevitably to lead to the development of nationalist trends in the sections of the Comintern. This prediction has become an evident fact. But, up to now, Czechoslovak, American, etc, Com-Chauvinism, seemed to be and to a certain extent was the reflection of the interests of Soviet diplomacy" ("The defense of the USSR"). Today one can surely predict the coming of a new stage. The development of the imperialist antagonisms, the obvious approach of the dangers of the war and the no less obvious isolation of the USSR will infallibly reinforce the national centrifugal trends within the ex-Comintern. Each of its sections will begin to display a patriotic policy on its own account. Stalin reconciled the Communist Parties of the Imperialist democracies with their national bourgeoisie. This stage is now over. The bonapartist match-maker has accomplished his role. From now on the com-chauvinists have to take care of their own fate, the interests of which do not always coincide with the 'defense of USSR'."

It is impossible to conciliate in the end the responsibility towards the Soviet bureaucracy and the responsibility towards a local social base. Led to choose under circumstances which require a choice - and if the bourgeoisie leaves then the possibility to choose - the leaderships of mass Stalinist parties end up choosing their own base. And this is quite consistent. The only parties to stand by the bureaucracy will be those which - and they are numerous in the West as well as in underdeveloped countries - didn't find a following in the masses, and which goes on without a following, without a base, without influence.

The evolution of the French Communist Party, which we will deal with in detail in a coming article, fits well into this frame-work. It is subjected to the same tension between fidelity to Moscow, and that of its role as a national reformist organisation.

WHENCE AND WHITHER

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY?

In this issue we begin the publication of a series of three articles in which we shall illustrate, through the evolution of the French Communist Party, the reasons and circumstances of the appearance of polycentrism. The first two articles, written from a historical angle will be devoted, respectively, to the growth of the stalinist party in France and its behaviour during the Popular Front period and at the beginning of the World War II. In a third article devoted to the present we shall draw conclusions from the evolution of the C.P. as a whole.

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Nearly half a century ago, from the 25th to the 31st of December 1920, the Congress of Tours took place, which was to decide to join the IIIrd International by 3208 votes against 1022 for the Parti Socialiste Unifié. Soon the majority took the name of Communist Party of France - French Section of the Communist International (S.F.I.C.) while the minority organised the Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.). 47 years later, the two branches born of the same trunk still grow separately. But while as far as the Communist International is concerned, the clivage between two wings of the same social democratic party was to widen and to lead to the forming of a proletarian revolutionary party opposed on a class basis to the reformist apparatus built by the minority, today the two organisations born of the Tours Congress, both profess a reformism which has nothing to arouse the other party's envy.

And if today the apostles of the left sigh over the "deplorable split" of 1920 and the division that resulted from it, they are entitled to do so with far less hypocrisy than their predecessors of those years. What might have become a gulf is now but a narrow crack that the C.P. does its best to seal from year to year.

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The formidable revolutionary wave of 1917 which swept away, first the tsar, then the Kerensky government, was considered by the revolutionists of that time only as the first of the tide that would wash away the foundations of capitalism in the whole world. The victory of the Russian proletariat would be followed by that of their comrades in the West. The Communist International proclaimed in 1919, was intended to be the instrument of struggle of the international working class. Its national sections would offer bolshevik-style proletarian leadership to the workers in each countries.

However, even if the Russian Revolution, followed by the formation of the Third International played the role of a catalyst in the gathering of the best elements in the socialist and syndicalist movements, even if they caused the split of more or less important factions of the Social-Democratic organisations of the IIInd International, even if the adhesions to the revolutionary International increased, the problem of forming bolshevik-style leaderships had not however been solved. Such a steered leadership in fact only existed in Russia.

The difficult task of handing down its own experience to young sections: of educating them, of leading them to educate themselves in their struggle, of progressively relieving them of those leaders who had been too strongly marked by their reformist past, in one word, the whole task of building revolutionary leaderships fell to the bolsheviks.

The bolshevik party did not have enough time to fulfill its task. The degeneration of the first workers' State caused its own degeneration. The predominant role played by the Bolshevik Party in the Communist International, formerly a revolutionary factor, turned into an unseemingly, if not unsurmountable, obstacle to the acquiring of a revolutionary training by the sections of the C.I. Under the influence of the soviet bureaucracy the International itself became an annex to the Russian foreign Office and the bounds of revolutionary fraternity prevailing among the sections gave way to blind obedience to the Kremlin leaders. Of what had made the strength of the Bolshevik Party and the International, Stalin kept only a gross caricature, or degenerated remains, but he kept them having in mind their utility to the bureaucracy.

Started at Lenin's school, the building of so-called Communist Parties reached completion at Stalin's. Now, one doesn't learn to be a revolutionist at that school. The most one can learn at such a school is obedience and submissiveness. But to the extent that this submission to the soviet bureaucracy excluded revolutionary training and politics, it made those parties inevitably receptive to reformism.

From them on, and it is the result of the evolution of Western mass Stalinist Parties, nothing is left to basically distinguish them from their so-called

"socialist" brothers except the subordination to Moscow, which is itself subject to a severe trial.

The history of the French C.P. finds its place in this frame work.

Even if several elements of a revolutionary syndicalist origin, such as Rosmer for example, played an important part in its foundation, its skeleton and the overwhelming majority of its leaders were those of the Socialist Party, the same S.P. which had so shamefully failed during the war. In fact, it was the great majority of that Party which had chosen to join the IIIrd International and the disbalance of 3 to 1 between the majority and the minority delegates at the Tours Congress, was even greater than the disbalance among the Party members. As a matter of fact, the C.P. gathered 130,000 members of the P.S.U., whereas the S.F.I.O. only gathered 30,000.

However, the fact of accepting the 21 conditions of the IIIrd International and the new name of "Communist" didn't directly transform the nature of the Party's leadership. Several months later, the IIIrd Congress of the C.I. accused the French leaders of being "detestable opportunists". This statement of Paul Faure, one of the leaders of the Tours Congress minority, shows how little he was scared by the tenderfoot "bolshivism" of his opponents:

"Let me tell you that you are not strangers to me: I know you well enough for I have often been in your company. So, when suddenly I see you take on at the right moment airs of experienced communists, I smile and go my way".

One must say that Paul Faure was in a position to make a judgement on his ex-friends, Marcel Cachin, Frossard and Co, who had studied with him at the same schools of reformism and social-patriotism, during the war.

Frossard, First General Secretary of the new party, was to explain later on to what extent even the draconian requirements of the "21 conditions" had no hold over the congenital opportunism of those newly-converted communists. "We were unable to take the 21 conditions seriously".

In fact, the leaders of the Communist International were aware of this sad reality. Lenin, who used to say that you couldn't catch an opportunist with formulas, knew perfectly well that no condition however draconian, would automatically eliminate all the reformists from the International. But for the Bolsheviki, the split of the Tours Congress was not the outcome of the struggle for a revolutionary party in France, it was only the beginning.

The new C.P. as a whole and its leaders in particular inherited the serious defect of a long reformist, social-democratic past in the P.S.U. A radical transformation of the habits, the practices and the political line, was

necessary. And this transformation meant a long and exacting struggle. In fact, there was little chance to change Cachin, Frossard, Verfeuil or Fabre into bolshevik leaders; what was needed was a new generation, with new revolutionary and proletarian traditions to emerge from the mass of youth entering the Party because it was for them the symbol of the October Revolution.

This struggle against the opportunist petty bourgeois, free mason elements of the Party's leadership, marked the 1920-23 years. The "French problem" was even one of the most important concerns of the International during that period. The texts published in Humbert Droz's book sent by the C.I. in France, "L'oeil de Moscou", attests to the sharpness of the struggle within the Party and the weakness of the actual support that the C.I. could rely on inside.

Opposing a right wing fraction, with nothing to distinguished itself either humanly, or politically from the S.F.I.O. leaders, opposing a heterogeneous centre which fluctuated as did Marcel Cachin, the I.C. could politically rely only on a relatively weak left wing which was poorly educated, sectarian, and itself heterogeneous.

Only after two years of struggle, near the beginning of 1923, did the Party succeed in eliminating from its leadership the most notorious opportunist elements, the members of masonic lodges, the reformists who openly opposed any discipline in the International. The resignation of Frossard from the General Secretariat and from the Party, on January 1, 1924, indicated in a way the end of the first period of the Party's transformation.

The elimination of the right and of part of the centre put an end to a long crisis. And the government's repression, as well as the arrest of a certain number of leaders (it was at the time of the struggle against the occupation of the Rhur by French Imperialism) rewelded the unity of a heterogeneous party torn by fractional and personal struggles. But even at that time, the International representative anticipated a loss of 50-60% before a genuine consolidation could take place on a sound basis provided that "the new leadership works all right".

Whatever the intransigence of the International's leadership toward the most reformist elements, its constant concern was to educate the Party in order that the elimination of this or that leader would not appear as the result of blind submission to orders coming from above, but as something necessary to give the party a sound revolutionary leadership and political line.

During the years of 1925-26, the control by the Stalinist faction over the apparatus of the Bolshevik Party as well as that of the International grew stronger and stronger.

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The very idea of the possibility of "socialism in one country" put forward for the first time by Stalin in 1924, implicitly meant a fundamental change in the orientation of the International. From an instrument of world revolution capable of reinforcing and of completing the work started by October 1917, it was to become an instrument designed to perpetuate the status quo. According to the Stalinist faction, what the workers' State needed was not revolutions in other countries, but peace, calm and the time necessary to build "socialism at a turtle's pace". Consequently the task which now fell to the International was to guarantee the U.S.S.R. this peace.

It followed quite naturally from this that since the goal assigned to the national sections was no longer to prepare revolution, there was no need for parties morally, politically or organisationally capable of leading the working class toward revolutionary struggle.

Revolutionary experience and integrity as prerequisite qualities for the militant and the leader faded into the background "before becoming mortal sins" and gave way to staunch obedience to Kremlin directives. There was no longer any need to understand in order to act more correctly. It was enough to submit to commands.

The slow but thorough change in the International took place at a moment when the French section was still too young, too uneducated, not sufficiently trained, not sufficiently free of its opportunist leadership to detect this fundamental shift, and especially to oppose it. On the contrary, the opportunism of leaders like Cachin predisposed it to support Stalin in the struggle between his centrism and the revolutionary wing of the Bolshevik Party.

The exhortation to revolutionary discipline during the time of Lenin's International bore late and rotten fruit under Stalin, and it was in the name of this "discipline" understood as servility that the centre of the French C.P. attacked a left wing which was inadequately armed to wage a fight.

In the name of the "Bolshevisation" of the party, the C.I. set about to eliminate all leaders suspected of having ever so little sympathy for the left opposition or ever so little intellectual independence. And the purged leadership acted the same way toward the rank and file militants. Endowed with the title of "bolshheviks", the Sémards and Cachins eliminated in 1924-25 one by one Souvarine, Monatte, Rosmer, Loriot - precisely those who came over to the October Revolution right from the start and who, after having been the initiators

of the French C.P. remained its soundest elements.

The party severely felt the effects of the so-called bolshevisation and of the "class against class" policy which it followed at the end of the twenties. Its membership fell almost constantly until '31. Counting more than four times as many members as the S.F.I.O. at the time of the split, it had fewer in 1931. 1920 - 130,000 members; 1927 - 64,000; 1931 - 29,000.

The loss of militants is especially perceptible in the industrial zones. According to Fauvet, the lost was 45% in Paris, 42% in Marseille, and 78% in the ironworks of the East.

Having inherited an important part of the working class base of the ex-PSU the French section of the C.I. (S.F.I.C.) rapidly lost a large part. It kept influence and solid roots only in the Paris region in the poorest strata of the proletariat who saw in the C.P. the Party of the October Revolution, and in some rural zones of the centre of France, owing to the fact that it was the most radically opposed to the government.

Whatever the disastrous consequences of the political line of Third Period imposed by the Kremlin, the C.P. followed it faithfully as long as it was imposed. The purges carried out by the Stalinist leadership of the International had been efficient: from then on the party was homogeneous and just as the soviet bureaucracy wished it to be staunchly obedient. Its political line was to faithfully follow all the twists and turns of Stalinist politics.

The party came out of this period numerically weakened with diminished influence, politically isolated. Nevertheless it was during this period that it achieved unity, that it gave itself the structure it has today, that it acquired its cadres. It was during this period that it educated the prototypes of Stalinist militants, devoted, politically narrow-minded and obedient to the party leadership, just as the latter is obedient to the soviet bureaucracy.

Thus, it was as a perfect Stalinist party that the S.F.I.C. was to confront the two great periods which, each for different reasons, helped transform it into a mass party, the most important French political party: first, the Popular Front period and then that of the Resistance and the Liberation.

WHENCE AND WHITHER

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY ? (II)

From the Congress of Tours till the changes foreboding the Popular Front, fifteen years went by. Ten of these years the French Communist Party spent in the matrix of the Kremlin bureaucracy. The Party came out of "bolshovisation" numerically weakened, little implanted, reduced to its simplest form, as it were, to its apparatus. But this apparatus was complete, polished and it functioned beautifully. Its structure was that of the perfect Stalinist party, its obedience to Moscow was flawless, its leadership was homogeneous : it was to remain practically unchanged for thirty years. From then on, its dependence on the Soviet bureaucracy was to be its guideline, its main driving force, which, changing direction but keeping its intensity, was to influence all the twists and turns of its political line.

The importance of the Popular Front period is due to the fact that for the first time, the Party gained a solid implantation among the masses. On the basis of a reformist, nationalist policy, it was to grow considerably. After the fashion of the Social-Democratic Party and in competition with it, it was to gain access to the "trough" of imperialism's super-profits. In consequence it became a national party in the fullest sense of the word — almost a governmental party — and then it was to be submitted to the pressures of its own social base, of its own public opinion. Representing the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy by its origins, and those of its own social base because of its implantation, it will no longer be free of the tension between these two antagonistic forces. And when the German-Soviet Pact and the first period of the war was to increase this tension, when the impossibility of conciliating these two interests now obviously contradictory was to impose a difficult choice, the party knew its first big crises which were of different nature from those accompanying its growth. And they were not to be the last ones.

It is not our subject here to describe and analyse the workers' upsurges between 1935 and 1938, nor even to examine the role played by the Communist Party, in these upsurges. All the less since, as far as the evolution of the Communist Party is concerned, the only significance of these upsurges is that they gave the party social roots it had not before. What was the nature of these roots ? On the basis of what policy were they gained ? These are the questions which interest us here. And to begin with, what are the factors which permitted

the Communist Party to break out of its isolation and to find the support of the masses?

Two factors are decisive here. The working class upsurges and the general political revival which was to push new social strata towards the working class' organisations, and the new orientation of the International which was to give to the policy of the Stalinist organisations a reformist and nationalist content.

Soon after the defeat of the German working class and Hitler's coming to power, the Soviet bureaucracy began one of these 180° turns which characterise its policy. Feeling threatened by German imperialism, it looked for its salvation towards a system of collective security. This system implies a rapprochement with the "Western democracies" which benefited from the imperialist Peace of Versailles, and thus was threatened by the German demands. France had a privileged situation in this plan. From then on, the role given to the Communist Party will be to contribute, within the limits of its strength, to pushing government policy in the direction of a strengthened opposition to Hitler's Germany. The denunciation of the Treaty of Versailles, which was still the day before one of the leit-motifs of the Stalinist propaganda, was to be put aside, and the reinforcement of French military potentiality was to be openly supported. The Pact of Mutual Assistance signed May 2, 1935, between the governments of the Soviet Union and France was to be followed by a communiqué which declared that "Mr. Stalin understands and fully approves of the policy of national defence carried out by France in order to maintain its armed strength at the level needed for security". The Stalinists fell into step with this, discarding the furious antimilitarism which had been theirs for years, they discover in the French army one of the main factors for the defence of the U.S.S.R. In consequence, the struggle for the strengthening of "French democracy" in the face of the fascist threat becomes a great revolutionary virtue.

And this is when the dialectic of History was to play a trick on the Soviet bureaucracy. It is on the bureaucracy's injunctions and to defend its interests, that it imposed a nationalistic and even chauvinistic policy on the French Communist Party. But under the pressure of its new rank and file gained on the basis of this nationalistic policy, the Communist Party in the end became nationalist on its own account, even when this nationalism turned against the interests of the bureaucracy. Speaking of an evolution which was developing in his time but which reached its ultimate conclusions only in our time, Trotsky wrote:

"Stalin reconciled the Communist parties of the imperialist democracies with their national bourgeoisie. This stage is now over. The bonapartist match-maker has accomplished his role. From now on the com-chauvinists have to take care of their own fate, the interests of which do not always coincide with the "defence of the U.S.S.R."

It is obvious that this new orientation toward the foreign policy of the French government was to lead to a similar orientation in other fields. Nationalism was to imply reformism. The struggle to unite all the national forces opposed, or supposedly opposed, to Fascist Germany, completed the struggle for an international anti-Hitler Front. From the "class against class" policy of equating social-democrats and fascists, they switched to a shameless courting of these very social-democrats and even, if not especially, to the radicals. If the consolidation of the Popular Front and its coming to power would not have been possible without the working class upsurge and the swing to the left, if the bourgeoisie accepted it because it was liable to check the popular movement, for the Communist Party it was a necessity which had nothing to do with this working class upsurge. For the Communist Party the main interest of the Popular Front was the alliance of the national anti-Hitler forces. The building of this alliance was the main aim of the French Communist Party in the field of internal policy.

The swing to the left, even if it played only a contingent role in the determination of the politics of the Communist Party, was nonetheless to have major importance for two reasons. First, by numerically strengthening the Party and by permitting it to win a certain number of positions in the course of municipal, then legislative elections, it was to give it an importance it lacked before. Then, the necessity of channelizing and checking the social explosion made the Socialist and Radical Parties much more open minded towards the Communist Party, whose collaboration was to become very useful. Thus the very influx of the workers who turned towards the Communist Party as the workers' party, haloed by its ties with the supposed continuators of the October Revolution, was capitalized on by the C.P. in order to carry out a nationalistic policy.

Once again, it is not our object here to examine the counter-revolutionary role played by the Communist Party during the period of the strikes. ("We have to know when to end a strike", etc). The fact remains that owing to the working class upheavals and to the Popular Front, the Party grew rapidly. From 1932 to 1936, its electorate doubled and its membership increased ten-fold.

Besides, it would be erroneous to believe that the development of its implantation was only due to the influx of struggling workers. In fact, it played both sides. Its line of neophyte nationalism and of opportune reformism exercised an influence on petty-bourgeois circles as great as that of its broadened halo as the revolutionary party within the working class. Having discovered, according to Moscow's orders, the patriotic virtues of the "Marseillaise", the French flag, Joan of Arc and the French democracy, the Party was not to miss any occasion to make the chauvinist petty-bourgeois's heart throb.

If not yet a "party entirely like the others", the Communist Party of

1937 was to be quite different from the Communist Party of 1932. It had strong social roots, 300,000 members, 1,500,000 electors, 70 deputies, two senators, hundreds of city councilmen, more than two thousands mayors. The trade-unions' unification allowed it to lay hands on the most important federations of the united C.G.T.. From now on it was to be firmly implanted in the labor aristocracy.

It stopped living only off the bureaucracy's subsidies. It had its own national "trough", supplied by the super-profits of French imperialism, to which from then on it had access, owing to - to use Trotsky's expression - "its penetration into the petty-bourgeois" ranks, its installation in the State apparatus, in the trade-unions, the parliaments, the municipalities, etc..."

The end of the swing to the left, the retreat of the workers and even the fall of the first and second Léon Blum government did not lessen the nationalist zeal of the Communist Party. They had a double interest : not only orders from Moscow, but henceforth also their own interest as a national party. The politics of the "national union" pays, and pays well. Before the withering away of the Popular Front, it was to even defend the idea of a French Front, in which would be included, aside from radicals and social-democrats, the liberals and the moderates. After the final defeat of the Popular Front, it rushed to give its accord to a government including practically the whole French political spectrum from Thorez to Paul Reynaud. If the plan didn't work out, it was not the fault of the Communists.

The increasing movement to the right, of the successive governments relieved the French Communist Party from the quasi governmental responsibilities which it had assumed under the Popular Front. It continued, however, to needle the government and its propaganda was concentrated on the demand for a greater firmness toward Germany. When the occasion arose, it voted for war credits.

After these increasingly vehement expressions of nationalism, the announcement of the German-Soviet Pact on August 23rd, 1939, fell like a bomb. Reversing their policy of collective security with the western democracies, Stalin concluded a non-aggression pact with yesterday's enemy. In the conflict which was to break out some days later, the U.S.S.R. was to find itself in fact on the side of Germany. After five years of anti-German, nationalist politics, the Communist Party was to find itself having to defend Stalin's decision and the order which was given to attack the imperialism of its own bourgeoisie... as well as that of Germany. After voting for military credits, after propagandising for the reinforcement of the military potential of France, it was to find itself obliged to preach revolutionary defeatism and the slogan "the enemy is in our own land".

After the euphoria of the National Union, the party came up against the open hostility of public opinion and of part of its own rank and file. For a

few weeks it tried to conciliate the unconciliable. Still defending the German-Soviet Pact, it declared that "the French Communists will collaborate without any reservations in national defence". Thorez himself declared that :

"if Hitler, in spite of all, starts the war, then let him know that he will find opposing him, the people of France united, with the Communists in the first rank, ready to defend the security of the country, freedom and independence of the people":

Forced to chose between submission to Moscow and the interests of the base of their party, the most faithful leaders remained uncertain and reluctant to take a position. The cleavage among the leaders reflected that of the whole party. Violent repression on the part of the State which struck the party, and its militants, thereby provoking a self-defence reaction and numerous calls to order from Moscow were necessary for the party to correct its line. This was done at the end of the year. But the party had lost 22 of its 72 deputies, an important part of its leadership and of its militants. Of the two contradictory forces to which it was submitted, loyalty to Moscow had prevailed. However this had not been without difficulties. And once again faced with repression, its publications outlawed, its leaders in jail, its municipal and parliamentary positions eliminated, the C.P. needed a new nationalist period, the period of the Resistance and of the Liberation, to recover the influence it had lost.

WHENCE AND WHITHER

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY ? (III)

The Hitler-Stalin Pact dealt a severe blow to the French C.P. The complete and obvious opposition between the policy of the Soviet Bureaucracy and that of the French Bourgeoisie left no room to manoeuvre and temporize. The French C.P. had to make a choice. After violent shake-ups it chose to defend the Bureaucracy's political line. But the cost of its choice was high. The Party's social base, won during five years of a nationalist and reformist political line, fell apart. Outlawed and persecuted, it lost its town-councils, deputies and elected officials of all kinds, control over a great part of the trade-unions : all that gave it a function, a social role inside the capitalist society. Accustomed, for five years, to sail with the wind, supported by a public opinion favourable to its policy of national defence, to its wisdom of a newly national party, after 1939, it smashed up against the very wave of chauvinism which it had ridden just before.

Just as at the beginning of the thirties, the C.P. was once more nearly reduced to its apparatus. Nevertheless, the very ferocity of the government repression counterbalanced to a certain extent the dislocating consequences of the turn of '39, at least on the level of the apparatus. To restructure and consolidate the apparatus, to adapt it to the conditions of clandestinity was a question of life or death. The repression left no time for the party to resolve its crisis, no possibility for the militants to think over their choice. And it was actually under Daladier and well before the German invasion that the C.P. trained itself for the clandestine struggle and again acquired the experience of internment camps and prisons.

Considered superficially, this two year period between 1939 and the invasion of the Soviet Union might appear as a return to proletarian internationalism by the Party after five years of a chauvinist political line. In fact, these five years had left their traces, and the C.P. was already organically incapable of carrying out a proletarian political line in any domaine whatsoever. Even if it threw a curse upon both imperialist camps, it did so in the name of well understood national interest. As the now underground "Humanité" proclaimed : "Neither the British soldiers with de Gaulle, nor the German soldiers with Pétain! Long live the unity of the French Nation!" The fight for "French independence" remains the leitmotiv of Stalinist propaganda, only Churchill's name

is sometimes added and sometimes replaces Hitler's as the main enemy of that independence. Nevertheless nationalism is not something abstract. It must take concrete form in submission to the policies of the national Bourgeoisie. The latter and its "public opinion" had no need for the abstract nationalism of the C.P. which, in spite of that nationalism, remained in a false position until June 22, 1941.

The invasion of the Soviet Union by the German army was considered by the Party as a real deliverance. After a two year interruption, loyalty to the Soviet Bureaucracy and conformity to national interests (i.e. those of the national bourgeoisie) are again compatible.

The Party followed with all the more enthusiasm this order to throw itself with all its strength into the fight against Germany, as this gave it the chance to find its place again in the "national union", at the least in the one which was formed around de Gaulle. The C.P. again became what it had chosen as its vocation to be: the patriots' party. From then on it was out of the question to bring a curse upon both German and Anglo-Saxon imperialism. The unreserved adhesion of the Soviet Union to the democratic bloc in opposition to the fascist bloc imposed upon the C.P. a unitary political line in relation to everyone who was not pro-German. The C.P. no longer distinguished itself from other anti-German organisations except by greater combativeness and a more repugnant chauvinism.

Although still underground and subject to even more ferocious repression, the Party recovered its audience. At first at the base, not only did it appear anew as a national party, but as the national party the most, if not the only, organised, trained and prepared to fight.

It was to control almost the whole of the inner resistance organisations; it draws on and organises all those who want to fight the Occupation. At the summit then, the Party makes a pledge of allegiance to the representatives of French imperialism among the Allies, to de Gaulle in particular.

On April 4, 1944, for the first time in its history, two C.P. leaders, Grenier and Billoux, enter a bourgeois government, or that which takes its place: de Gaulle's French Committee of National Liberation. This meant the recognition and consecration of its role by the pro-Ally political representatives of the French Bourgeoisie.

Mingling the hammer and the sickle with the cross of Lorraine, the Party tried to identify itself with the Resistance movement - a goal which was reached in fact, under de Gaulle's patronage.

Thousands of its militants were sacrificed on the altar of the collaborat-

ion with the Bourgeoisie. But the Party obtained the right to appear in a free France hand in hand with the other political formations, as a genuine national party, and even as a party in power.

It is impossible to understand the present evolution of the French Communist Party without grasping the meaning and the consequences of its politics during the Resistance and Liberation periods. For it is during that period that the Party acquired the implantation which it maintains even today and which finally determines its nature.

From the moment when the U.S.S.R. entered the war until the beginning of the Cold War, almost six years, the interests of the Soviet Bureaucracy coincided with those of the allied imperialists in general and the French Bourgeoisie in particular: first, to defeat Germany and afterwards to assure the transition from war to peace without damage, without collisions, in other words, without the threat of proletarian revolution.

More total and more open than any ever carried out by Social-Democratic Party in 1914, the shameless policy of "Union Sacrée" followed by the French C.P. as by the other Stalinist parties was, after all, only the local form taken by the Holy Alliance between the bureaucracy and imperialism symbolized by Yalta. In this sense, its chauvinism and later on its openly counter-revolutionary policy was only the reflection of the interests of the Russian Bureaucracy.

Nonetheless, through its policy of rolling up the sleeves, by helping to rebuild the capitalist economy and the state apparatus, by taking control of and strangling any initiative on the part of the workers, the French C.P. accomplished its own social role (national): the same role that had been given to Social-Democracy after the First World War. The social base it had acquired thereby was of a similar nature to that of Social-Democracy. The French C.P. acquired it, if not to the detriment of the socialists, - since the latter experienced a relative growth, too - at least in competition with them.

The development of the Party, the growth of its social roots were tremendously accelerated. Its members numbered 330,000 in 1937, 545,000 in 1945 and 804,000 in 1946. Its voters, approximately, 1,500,000 in 1937 (15% of the ballots) grew to 5,400,000 (28% of the ballots) in 1946. This increased influence took shape in 158 deputies (out of 544), by the take over of thousands of town councils, of regional posts. Lastly, the Party held posts in the government and in the State apparatus.

Among those hundreds of thousands of new comers who swelled the Party's ranks and among those millions who voted for it, few did so because they considered it a revolutionary Party. In their eyes, it was indeed a left-wing Party but was especially the Party of the "Resistance" and, even more, a Party in

power. Furthermore, it must be said that the Party experienced a huge influx of patriotic, petty-bourgeois members or even simply of careerists. It developed very little, or even lost members in the industrial areas of northern France, the Paris area and in the Southeastern region (according to Fauvet's Histoire du P.C.F.).

Firmly rooted in the petty-bourgeoisie, in the labour aristocracy through its control of the C.G.T. apparatus, in the local administrations, the C.P. has maintained these roots up till now. The present social base of the Party is the same as in 1945-46. It was acquired thanks to a political orientation dictated by the needs of the defence of the Soviet Bureaucracy. But it became - and still is - a hot house for a whole set of national influences completely alien to Moscow.

The convergence of the interests of the two poles which determine the political line of the French C.P. did not last. The beginning of the cold war, by putting an end to the international Holy Alliance, also put an end to the Holy Union so profitable for the C.P. For six years the Party was again rejected by all other French political formations, even those who stood in the opposition, and was forced to adopt at the same time a more rigid political line.

For the same reasons as in 1939, the C.P. underwent vacillations in 1947, when, once again, the interests of the bureaucracy and those of the bourgeoisie no longer coincided. This divergence of interests cost the C.P. its place in the government, its position as a party in power. Moscow had some difficulty reinforcing its ties with the C.P. and reminding it of its duty. At the meeting of the Cominform which took place a few months after the ouster of the Communists from the government, the French Communist Party was singled out for admonition. It was accused of "having permitted Ramadier and Blum to manoeuvre it", of having continued to present itself as a government party, etc. Of course, such attitudes had been not only condoned but even prescribed by Moscow two years earlier. But the French C.P. had been so accustomed to the peaceful situation of a government party that it was ready to stay in such a situation on its own account, even against the will of the Kremlin.

If, in spite of all, the contradictions between the French C.P. and the bureaucracy did not lead to a split and if, in spite of its hesitations the French C.P. had, once again, followed the shift in policy, it is due to the fact that on one hand it did not lose all it had and on the other hand what it lost, it was already bound to lose.

The French bourgeoisie no longer wanted the C.P. to take part in the government, thus, in this matter, the party had no choice. On the other hand, although thrown back into the opposition and even isolated within the opposition, it lost neither its town-councils, its deputies, nor its control over the C.G.T.,

in one word, it kept all that makes its strength: it kept its roots. Thus, this change was nothing comparable to the 1939 disaster.

Even if, during the '51-52 period, virulent anti-Americanism, adventurist actions such as the demonstration against Ridgway, which were imposed upon the Party, resulted in a certain decline of its influence, the loss of 1/3 of its members and of part of its voters, the C.P. never really went against the stream. Basically the petty-bourgeoisie was quite satisfied with this anti-American nationalism. The isolation of the Party was political, but it never implied a break with the strata which enabled it to develop.

Since 1953, after the vote for Mendès-France, and especially since 1956, after the vote of special powers for Guy Mollet, the Party broke this political isolation from other formations. It is now reintegrated into the official opposition. Today, its perspective is to become a government party.

What has become of the French Communist Party? Where is it going? Is its policy still determined by its ties with Moscow?

The French C.P. is a big party, and is strongly implanted among the masses. Large strata of the nation have found their political expression in the Party. It is no longer a simple transmission belt of the Kremlin: it has found a social content, a social base of its own. This social base is that of Social-Democracy, finding its roots in the enterprises through the seizure of the union apparatus, a seizure which permits it to benefit from the privileges the bourgeoisie accords to the labour aristocracy. It has taken root also, to an even larger extent, in the management of town-councils and local administrations. "Special time" for the union delegates, subsidies given to trade-unions and town-councils, remuneration of the members elected, these are the channels through which, according to Trotsky's expression the C.P. "draws at the same source as Social-Democracy, that is from the super-profits of imperialism".

The French C.P. is no longer subject only to the pressures of the Soviet Bureaucracy, as it had been during the first period of its existence, but also to that of its own social base.

It is subject to the imperative pressures of its function as a national reformist party, and to those of its national base. And it is determined to benefit from all the prerogatives of a national party not even excluding the exercise of power. This, of course, within the framework and in the interest of the capitalist system.

In fact, the evolution of the French C.P. - similar to that of all the mass Communist Parties in the Western countries - leaves no doubt as to the di-

rection resulting from the influence of the two forces which determine its political line.

Time does not work in the same way on these two forces; whereas one of them, that which comes from the social base of the Party, becomes more and more powerful, the other, that which keeps the Party under Moscow's influence, declines. And this is the only possible evolution.

For how, in fact, do the ties connecting the French C.P. to the bureaucracy on one hand, and those connecting it to the national bourgeoisie on the other hand, manifest themselves? For the former these ties are based upon the material support of the Kremlin; for the latter, they are based upon that part of the imperialistic superprofits allotted to the C.P. as a national-reformist party. Today, "Moscow's gold" is more and more a legend and it represents very little compared to that fountain-head which is constituted by the superprofits of French imperialism.

But not only on the level of material support is the pole of attraction of the bureaucracy giving way to that of the national bourgeoisie. The ties to one or the other pole are also determined by men, by leaders. The loyalty towards Moscow of men such as Thorez or Duclos still bore the faded mark of the October Revolution, and above all, was characterised by the long and hard school of absolute obedience to which Stalin had subjected all party leaders. But that generation is ageing and by and by disappearing, or finally adapting itself. And the new generation, the one now taking over responsibility at the federal level and even in the Central Committee, this generation was formed at the chauvinist school of the Resistance. It has never known loyalty against the winds and tides, against "public opinion". It has known only a loyalty whose political consequences suited the tastes of that same public opinion.

The attachment of this generation to Moscow is to a large extent the reflection of that of the preceding generation. And in so far as the new generation has an attachment of its own, it is not to the Russia of Soviets, but to the Russia of Stalingrad, Russia the ally during the patriotic resistance period. Thereby even this attachment is endowed with a nationalistic tinge. By their personal ties, by their affinities, these new leaders are brought closer and closer to their colleagues in Parliament, municipal counsellors and others, accomplishing a social function similar to theirs.

For a long time the French C.P. was considered the most Stalinist of the Western Communist Parties, and by this appellation was meant its unconditional submission to the Bureaucracy. But, if the expression of "polycentrism" comes from the Italians, as far as its application is concerned, the French C.P. has gone almost as far as the Italian C.P. For its submission to the Kremlin, by

forcing it to follow a policy determined by the interests of the Russian bureaucracy, prevents it from following the policy of a really national party, even if today it does not force it to confront dramatic choices. One has only to see how disagreements in the field of foreign policy impede the rapprochement with Mitterrand and the Fédération de la Gauche (especially those disagreements concerning the Common Market, "Europeanism", or the Atlantic Treaty). And behind those divergences between organisations stands the warning of the bourgeoisie which is neither willing nor able to fully recognize the C.P., unless it is ready to support the bourgeoisie's foreign policy, whatever it may be.

Precisely in order to carry out a foreign policy in harmony with its national-party interests, the C.P. is obliged, if not to completely break with Moscow, at least to win the right to determine its own policies. The explicit or implicit claim contained in "polycentrism", that is the right for a C.P. to elaborate its own political line, is only the theoretical justification of the necessity imposed on a party by its social nature. In this sense polycentrism, far from being the cause of the weakening of ties to Moscow, is its very consequence. At the same time, it is the sign of a new step on the road leading to an eventual complete break.

Today, the situation is not yet ripe enough for the Stalinist leaders to be placed before a choice implying such a break. The French bourgeoisie offers them nothing for the moment, and at most suggests through its "left-wing" representatives, that if the party gives solid guarantees, a break with Moscow, for example, it is not impossible that one day it could become a partner in power. As long as this situation remains the French C.P. can be satisfied with publishing in the columns of "L'Humanité", texts such as Aragon's letter protesting against the condemnation of Siniavsky and Daniel, by way of a guarantee of independence. This is already a lot because of what it symptomizes, but it is still very little.

Faced with the choice between its national base and loyalty to the bureaucracy, in 1939 the French C.P. still chose the bureaucracy. To-morrow, if it is faced with such a choice and if the bourgeoisie leaves it the possibility to choose, it will undoubtedly cut the fragile ties which still bind it to Moscow. It will then openly become what it has been for a long time in practice: a national-reformist party.

"It will be an excellent government party" - exclaims Serge Mallet in an article praising the C.P. in the columns of the "Nouvel Observateur". Indeed it will be, just as the official "socialist" leaders, an excellent and trustworthy manager of French capitalism.

**DOES THE EXAMPLE
OF THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST MINISTERS
OPEN UP PERSPECTIVES FOR THE WESTERN COMMUNIST PARTIES ?**

It cannot be denied that the participation of Communist Party members as ministers in the Portuguese government is a political event whose relevance reaches far beyond the boundaries of Portugal's political life. Except for a few rare cases, Stalinist parties have been kept clear of any governmental participation for over 25 years in the Western world. In this case, however, the Portuguese Communist Party rose from clandestinity to be given government jobs that its fellow Communist Parties—even where they are much more powerful—have been denied for over a quarter of century.

If the decision to call CP representatives into the government had been made by the Portuguese bourgeoisie itself, this would have deserved careful attention. But such cannot be the case. For the Portuguese bourgeois politicians to take this step, it took at least the implicit support of the main imperialist countries concerned here—namely that of the United States and, to a lesser extent, that of Great Britain. This does not merely arise from the dependence of the Portuguese bourgeoisie on that of these two countries. It also comes from the fact that U.S. imperialism has for years been the watch-dog of ostracism of CPs in every single capitalist country. Even if the Portuguese experience were to remain an isolated case, a unique experience, its very existence reveals a change in the methods of U.S. imperialism. The experiment carried out by the Portuguese bourgeoisie raises questions as to the attitude of the Western bourgeoisies towards the CPs all the more acutely, in so far as it can be

seen to be belonging to an evolution which tends to integrate partially those CPs into the nation's political life. Although Portugal is the only country where this evolution has actually reached its ultimate consequences, it can nevertheless be found in other Western countries as well.

One could think of two other countries where the national bourgeoisie has to face economic, social, and political problems of a kind not unlike those encountered by the Portuguese bourgeoisie: namely, Greece and Spain. As regards Greece, the possibility of calling on Communist participation in the government is a solution that even the political forces presently in power contemplate more-or-less openly. As for Spain, the evolution is far more restricted, as the only response that the CP is getting for its offers comes from the opposition. But it should be noted that even the most reactionary circles are responding, as witnessed by a pres-

conference held on 30 July by Santiago Carillo, Secretary General of the Spanish CP, and Calvo Serer, the adviser of Don Juan—Spain's aspiring future king—, who were imagining together, and in the name of a single «democratic junta,» the future of Spain after Franco's death.

The fact that a fraction of the bourgeois political forces both in Greece and in Spain have a favorable attitude towards the CPs does not in any way imply that the bourgeoisie of either country feels ready to imitate the example of Portugal. It merely implies that this is a political solution that should not be rejected *a priori*. And this is no worthless gift for the Stalinist parties after 25 years of hardships and witch-hunting. This is enough for all sizable CPs, including the two most powerful ones in Western Europe—the French and the Italian CPs—to regain hope. All the more so as regards the French CP, as it can support its optimism as to the likelihood of its associating one day with those in power by referring to the outcome

of the presidential election campaign. Not only did a political force fully acknowledged by the bourgeoisie associate the CP with its own chances of winning, but it succeeded in doing so without the bourgeoisie resenting it. Joining forces with the CP, which is what Mitterrand did, is no longer considered as sheer infamy, as would have been the case a few years ago. On the contrary, it means preserving the possibility of one type of political solution for which the time is not yet ripe—and may not be so for quite a while—, but which the bourgeoisie quite unperturbably considers as a possibility.

The loosening of the attitude of the Western bourgeoisies towards the CPs is one aspect of the current evolution. But it is a prudent loosening, which gives a fair idea of the defiance that the bourgeoisie still feels towards the Stalinist parties. As far as it can judge, the bourgeoisie sees the CPs as *a priori* less reliable and less secure than social-democratic parties for instance.

WHY WAS OSTRACISM ENFORCED AGAINST THE COMMUNIST PARTIES?

It is a long time since the obstacle against integrating CPs into bourgeois political life has ceased to be an absolute one—that is, a class one. Today, the Stalinist parties are *not*—neither are they willing to be or capable of being—the instruments of the proletarian revolution: in a deep social sense, their social-democratization is now complete. Indeed, while relying on working-class support, they have become the instruments of stability—perhaps the most powerful ones—of the bourgeois system. Moreover, their only political perspective, in so far as the ultimate goal of any political party is to be in power, is to govern *within* the framework of the bourgeois state, which means serving the bourgeois order, not trying to overthrow it.

Such is the situation, and the bourgeoisie is aware of it. This is the reason why, in the past, it called on Communist participation

in its governments, as was the case in a number of Western capitalist countries at the end of World War II.

But it should be noted that this «social-democratization» is an original process which occurred in connection with the process of degeneration of the Soviet State: this evolution has had a strong influence on the parties which make up the Stalinist movement, thus giving it features which distinguish it from social-democracy proper. These features are precisely what make it look suspicious in the eyes of the bourgeoisie and prevent it from reliably defending all bourgeois interests.

The powerful sway of the Russian revolution tore the CPs away from social-democracy, and thereby from bourgeois control; at the same time, it established new relation-

ships between the CPs and the working class and tied the fate of these parties to that of the Russian revolution. So the degeneration of the Russian revolution was what prevented them from becoming adequate revolutionary parties, likely to lead the proletariat to seizing power. Ultimately, the bureaucracy which arose from this degeneration served as middleman between the bourgeoisie and the CPs—in order to gain the benevolence of the bourgeoisie in certain circumstances—and asked the CPs to patch up the failures of the bourgeois social order, thus leading them along the path to «social-democratization.»

The process has not yet come to a standstill. The evolution which is progressively bringing the CPs back into the arms of the bourgeoisie has not yet completely made up for the split which resulted from the October revolution. The reason for this is precisely that this evolution has taken place to a certain extent (although it is less and less so) under the influence of the Soviet bureaucracy. The influence of bureaucracy on the CPs was the key to their integration into the bourgeois social order. But at the same time it prevents the integration from being complete. There are two types of reasons for this: firstly, the bourgeoisie can rely only on parties which directly serve its interests, not on parties that do so through the action of some social force foreign to it; secondly, the CPs can be used by the bureaucracy only if they

retain some influence among the working class—precisely because this influence is what the bureaucracy can trade with the bourgeoisie—and so the CPs are particularly careful not to let this influence dwindle away. This explains their constant preoccupation not to tolerate any enemies on their left, or let themselves be outflanked, even if it means taking the lead in some struggles so as to cut the ground from under the feet of potential competitors on their left.

If a party is to represent the bourgeoisie among the working class, it will not only have to be free of any desire to overthrow the bourgeois social order; it will also be required that it should not threaten the most immediate interests of the bourgeoisie. And it will have to be ready—if the bourgeoisie demands it—to give up its audience, its influence, or even its very existence in order to preserve those immediate interests.

The ties of the CPs with Moscow, and their oversensitiveness to the working class are obstacles which, together with their total integration into the national bourgeois political system, have had varying degrees of importance according to times and circumstances. But it remains that the fundamental trend is towards an increasing «social-democratization» of the CPs which is detrimental both to their ties with the Soviet state and to their specific connections with the working class.

WHY OSTRACISM IS NOW BEING LOOSENED ?

At the time when it engaged in the cold-war in order to isolate the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism could not afford to tolerate parties likely to be in any way compliant with the USSR taking part in Western governments. The witch hunt which took place against Stalinist parties—or even vague or alleged supporters, as during the darkest days of McCarthyism—was the counterpart of the «containment» policy.

And every one remembers how, at that time, those who are now offering a friendly

hand to the CP in France, for example, had fallen in step with that policy. Not only was it considered suicidal for a bourgeois politician to contemplate a potential participation of the CP in government responsibilities, but indeed, the mere fact of getting CP votes in a parliamentary decision was looked down upon as a blemish which even as famous a «left-wing» politician as Mendes-France fought shy of.

But things have changed precisely in this respect, partly because the dependence of the

CPs on the bureaucracy has undergone some erosion. Even those parties which used to be considered the most faithful ones (such as the French CP) show signs of the loosening of those ties. The French CP itself is no longer as strict in taking its official political stands. It is certainly not because the bourgeoisie considers it a sufficient pledge of future reliability that the French CP should disagree partly with the USSR on the Solzhenitsyn case, or about the invasion of Czechoslovakia. These are only promising indications.

But the determining factor in the loosening of the attitude of the bourgeoisies towards the CPs is not so much in the change in the relationship of the latter with the bureaucracy, but in the importance that the main watchdog of bourgeois order—U.S. imperialism—accords to this change.

The Tet offensive in 1968 signalled the end of the containment policy, for it made clear that U.S. imperialism would be incapable of winning over the Vietnamese people in their fight for independence. The strategy consisting of isolating China and the USSR, and of preventing any country in the Western zone from going over to the other side, was thus demonstrated to be useless and costly. So U.S. imperialism decided to revise the policy it had pursued since the beginning of the cold war, and to elaborate a new, global, and subtler strategy that would include partial agreements—or complete ones—with the USSR and China, and would agree to fluctuating boundaries between blocks, provided variations occurred in both directions. This new strategy, which implies negotiation and even, whenever possible, collaboration with the USSR and China, entails loosening relationships with national CPs, and putting an end to ostracism towards them. As was the case during the war and just after it, U.S. imperialism is more tolerant and lets the bourgeoisies which support it free to use the CPs in their countries if they think it advisable, including possible CP participation in their governments.

The Portuguese bourgeoisie seized on this possibility. It called on the CP to help make the transition (from an inadequate regime of

dictatorship) easier with respect to the working class and to regiment it in the building up of the country's economy.

It would be wrong to infer from this that other bourgeoisies will readily imitate Portugal. For, if the U.S. veto is raised, individually, bourgeois people still do not trust CPs when their private interests are concerned because the CPs are too sensitive to working-class pressures (as this feature of theirs still survives).

The bourgeoisie still does not have reliable proof—as it does for social-democracy—, that a CP would be ready to disappear rather than let workers' struggles develop when the bourgeoisie insists on their being suppressed. Evidence even runs counter to this hope. 1968 is still alive in the memory of the French bourgeoisie, which will not easily forgive the CP for launching a general strike rather than running the hypothetical risk of seeing the movement taken over by «leftists.»

In fact, when a CP takes action for this type of reasons, it will never disrupt the foundations of the bourgeois order. Neither can a CP be driven into revolutionary struggles. But its desire not to be cut off from the working class which, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, is an excessive one, can eventually turn out to be dangerous for the bourgeoisie, be it only with respect to its being compelled to give out more money than it normally would have. Hindering the development of struggles does not compensate, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, for launching them. Especially since being able to launch an action does not necessarily imply being able to stop it. To what extent would the bourgeoisie trust a party which might in some circumstances consider its own party interests more important than those of the bourgeoisie and thus aggravate social troubles instead of stopping them?

When considering the possibility of resorting to their own CP, other bourgeoisies will certainly take the Portuguese experience into account. The ability of the Portuguese CP to stop working-class struggles even though it meant losing its recently-acquired influence is not negligible. But, so

far, from the bourgeoisie's point of view, the experience is far from satisfactory. However, it is not impossible that other bourgeoisies facing problems similar to those of Portugal might try a similar experience.

But, from a more general standpoint, the chances of the CPs participating in power depend on the worsening of the economic situation. Any bourgeoisie is reluctant to entrust a CP with the direction of its own affairs. But, at the same time, the political staff of the bourgeoisie is getting ready for such a solution just in case it might be absolutely necessary in particular circumstances to

get out of the crisis by trying to domesticate the working class and impose sacrifices on it through its organizations.

But, if a crisis occurs, the bourgeoisie will have other solutions as well. These solutions will not require the working class to be domesticated, but rather to be crushed. This is why the major responsibility of the CPs lies in their putting everything into their one political prospect (which the accession of the Portuguese CP to power makes far from improbable), rather than preparing the working class for the fights which will take place if there is a crisis.