

# The Truth About the "Corridor Congress"

**W**HAT really happened at the VI Congress? What is the truth about the "corridor congress"? Up to now this question has been taboo in the Party; merely to ask it was to invite expulsion. But at last the political offensive of the C.P.-Majority Group has broken thru this wall of silence. In his article in the *Daily Worker* of October 18 ("Lovestone and the 'Corridor Congress'") Earl Browder has been compelled to take up this most important question. But now that it has been forced into the open the line of the revisionists is to *confuse* the real issue, to *distort* the actual events beyond recognition and even to "invent" facts that may be convenient. But a question like this cannot be solved by such methods; such a problem requires an honest and objective discussion of the real issues centering about the question of the "corridor congress" for these issues touch the very heart of the present crisis in the Comintern.

## *Before the VI Congress*

At the XV Conference of the C.P.S.U. (December 1928) Comrade Bukharin made the report on the international situation and brought forward the main line which was later embodied as the political line of the VI Congress. Already at this time there were some comrades—chiefly Schatzkin and Lominadze—who carried on a bitter polemic against the chief ideas of Bukharin's report (the first approach to the question of the third period, the question of Trotskyism and the right danger, etc.). The line of their attack on Bukharin's report bore within itself distinct germs of a revision of some of the most important principles of Leninism and of the traditional views of the Comintern. Altho at the XV Conference Stalin came out in defense of Bukharin's report which was of course approved, a keen eye could already see that Stalin's attitude was far from wholehearted and that there was some sort of under-cover connection between him and the Lominadze-Schatzkin group.

At the IX Plenum of the Ecce (February 1928) the same situation arose. The line of comrade Bukharin's report was the same, the tendency to revisionism was more marked, not only among some Russian comrades but also among some Germans (Thalmann, Neumann). Stalin's position was even more ambiguous than before.

At the July 1928 Plenum of the C.P.S.U. (just before the VI World Congress) the situation was far more developed. Lominadze continued his attack on Bukharin's report (which was the line of the C.P.S.U. and the C.I.) and extended his polemic on a general international scale. For instance, he denounced the then American Party leadership (the present C.P.-Majority Group) as right wing. Manuilsky, speaking for the Russian Polburo, repudiated Lominadze's attack upon the American Party and Lominadze's views were rejected by the Plenum which characterized the previous Party leadership as the "most left" the American Party had ever had. But that the opposition to Bukharin (who represented the line of the C.P.S.U. and the C.I.) was wide-spread and that a so-called "Stalin group" was in existence as the expression of this opposition was already clear. Altho, as yet, Stalin himself said nothing, one could already clearly foresee the coming struggle in the C.P.S.U. Some of the American delegates (Lovestone) were approached by those who called themselves "Stalinites" and the attempt was made to line them up against Bukharin who was still the recognized head of the C.I. The "Stalinites" (as they called themselves) defended the removals that had taken place in Lenin-grad and Moscow. They attacked Bukharin and especially Rykoff as "right-wingers." They went out of their way to defend some of the Trotskyites who had just been re-admitted (Zinoviev) and said that "they were better than some of the members of the Polburo." The campaign of underground rumors and intrigues had begun. It was clear that Stalin was behind it all.

What was the political significance of these events? It was clear that for some time Stalin and his agents had been organizing an opposition to Bukharin both in the C.P.S.U. and in the Comintern. This opposition based itself upon what was then essentially and what came later to be very clearly a revision of the line of the Comintern and of some of the most important principles of Leninism. Because of the "relation of forces" (that is, the strength of Bukharin in the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern) Stalin did not dare to come out in the open. Instead, he "agreed" to everything putting forward from time to time his ideas thru the agency of others, and particularly pre-

paring for the open struggle by means of the underground factional campaign and by certain organizational steps.

## *The VI World Congress*

This was still the situation at the VI World Congress (July 1928). Comrade Bukharin was the reporter on both the international situation and the Program. (This is the first time any leader of the C.I. made two major reports at a World Congress or an Ecce Plenum.). The important questions that were to arise at the Congress naturally came up in the Russian delegation. The discussion on the international situation centered around the questions of the *third period*. The viewpoint proposed by Bukharin and finally adopted by the VI Congress was vigorously attacked by Lominadze who put forward the revisionist viewpoint now adopted by the present leadership of the Ecce. After a very stormy session the Russian Delegation endorsed Bukharin's standpoint by a vote of 70 against 1. Stalin was not yet ready to come into the open and so Lominadze stood isolated—officially. Another important question discussed was "decolonization." Here the position of comrade Bukharin against decolonization carried by a vote of 57 to 14. Bukharin's line was therefore endorsed by the C.P.S.U. delegation and when he presented his draft thesis to the Polsecretariat of the Ecce a few days before the Congress opened, it was presented in the name of the C.P.S.U. delegation consisting of Stalin, Molotov, Gussev, Manuilsky, Piatnitsky, Lozovsky, Moireva, etc.

In the German delegation also there was a sharp debate on the question of the third period. The leaders of the majority of the German delegation (Thalmann, Neumann, etc.—the loyal supporters of the revisionist Stalin group) came out openly against the conception of the third period and actually officially rejected it. It was only after pressure was applied by Stalin—who judged this action to be very undiplomatic and tactless, for the time was not yet ripe—that this decision was rescinded and the German delegation "approved" the line of the theses presented by Comrade Bukharin.

The VI Congress opened in the atmosphere of tense speculation on the differences that had already shown themselves at the July 1928 Plenum of the C.P.S.U. Simultaneously with the opening of the official Congress took place the formation of the Stalin factional caucus which constituted the "corridor congress" whose main task it was to carry on a vicious underground agitation against the main line of the Congress and against its chief defenders (Bukharin, etc.) and to prepare organizationally and politically for the time when the struggle would come out into the open. The "corridor congress" absolutely poisoned the atmosphere of the Congress. The "corridor congress" worked feverishly to undermine the prestige of the Congress and of its political leader (Bukharin), to organize its forces for an open struggle and to prepare its revisionist political line for this struggle. *While the VI Congress was officially approving the report and adopting the theses of Comrade Bukharin, the "corridor congress" was laying the political basis for the revisionist line that was to come and that was to destroy the entire line of the Congress.*

*(Concluded in the next issue.)*

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# The Truth About the "Corridor Congress"

(Concluded from the last issue)

It was Comrade Lovestone who at the last meeting of the Seniore Konvent ("the committee of elders," made up of the most trusted and responsible comrades) brought up the whole question of the "corridor congress," made a fierce attack upon it and a vigorous defense of the VI Congress. A special meeting of the Seniore Konvent was called. Bukharin was chairman of the session. Stalin reported on behalf of the Russian delegation. In his report he repudiated all rumors regarding and differences in the Russian Polburo. He emphatically denied that there were any right-wingers or right wing views in the Russian Polburo or Central Committee. He introduced a resolution signed by every member of the Russian Polburo. This resolution read in part:

*"The undersigned members of the Political Buro of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union declare before the Seniore Konvent of the Congress that they most emphatically protest against the circulation of rumors that there are dissensions among the members of the Polburo of the C.C. of the C.P.S.U."*

The declaration went on to condemn speculation on such "differences" and to deny any rumors as to a right-wing in the Russian Polburo.

After this session of the Seniore Konvent Comrade Lovestone reported to the American Delegation on what had happened there. Then Lovestone presented a motion condemning speculation and the rumors about differences, etc., in fact repeating the unanimous declaration of the Russian Polburo almost word for word. This motion was adopted—but Browder, Foster, Bittelman, Cannon, Gomez, Siskind and Johnstone, (the minority of the delegation) voted against it!

## The Question of "Amendments"

In his article Comrade Browder, who participated very actively in the "corridor congress" and very inactively in the Congress itself, declares that there were "twenty-two amendments" to the Thesis on the international situation, which are supposed to have changed the line of the thesis. Comrade Browder is wrong on three counts. First of all, there were more than 22 amendments proposed and adopted. Secondly, the alleged "amendments" he cites were never made at all, were in fact parts of the original thesis. Thirdly, he forgets to say that the amendments which he, Cannon, Spector, Neumann, Lominadze and others introduced on behalf of the "corridor congress" were rejected. These are matters of fact and record.

The VI Congress elected a Political Commission to put the thesis on the international situation in its final form. Comrade Lovestone represented the American Party in this commission, no other member of the American Party was there. This Political Commission had several sessions and elected a sub-committee of Bukharin, Molotov, Thalmann, Lozovsky, Semard, Lovestone, Ercoli, Jilek and Schuller. This sub-committee handled over 50 amendments, some of them presented by Bukharin himself. Not a single one of the "amendments" cited by Browder was ever presented—evidently they exist in Comrade Browder's own imagination only. In the sub-committee there were several sharp debates and in the end a number of amendments were adopted which supplemented the thesis and were fully in harmony with its main line. Those that were out of harmony with its main line were rejected. Such are the facts on the question of amendments. *The official documents will bear them out.*

## The American Party at the VI Congress

As is well known the American Party played quite an important role at the VI Congress. The leaders of the American delegation (Lovestone, Wolfe, Weinstone, Pepper) were among the most vigorous defenders of the line of the Congress while the leaders of the minority (Foster, Cannon, Bittelman, Browder, etc.) were among the most active agents of the "corridor congress." This fact has had a profound influence upon the recent development of our Party.

Already at the July 1928 Plenum of the C.C. of the C.P.S.U. the heralds of the "corridor congress" began their offensive against the American Party. Lominadze declared that the American Party had a right-wing leadership. But the Plenum rejected this viewpoint.

In the Congress the offensive against the American Party continued. In the sub-committee of the Political Commission Lozovsky proposed an amendment attacking the then American

Party leadership. This amendment was decisively defeated and Comrade Lozovsky lost control of himself and left the session.

The whole net of intrigues of the "corridor congress" was well dramatized in the famous Foster-Stalin interview. At a time when the Congress had officially adopted an attitude towards the American Party (endorsement of its leadership and work, rejection of the charge of right-wing line against it, etc.) Comrade Stalin, in a secret interview he had with Comrade Foster, expressed a viewpoint directly opposed to the line of the Congress, promised to reverse the Congress decisions on America and to install Foster in power.

Finally, when the thesis came before the Congress after its consideration by the Political Commission, it proved so unsatisfactory to the Foster minority of the delegation that they made a public statement of their disagreements with it. This public statement—the notorious "Johnstone reservations"—are of great significance. In the first place, they were obviously made with the advice, consent and assistance of the leaders of the "corridor congress" (Stalin) as the expression of some of the most important political views of the "corridor congress." They constituted a half-disguised advance declaration of war. In the second place, the revision of the line of the VI Congress that began immediately after the Congress itself proceeded along the lines laid down in the "reservations"—especially in America. In the third place, the overwhelming fact of the reservations gives the lie to every one of Browder's arguments. If the thesis that Comrade Bukharin presented was in fact rejected by the Congress and was completely modified by "22 amendments" so that in its final form it had the "correct line"—and this is exactly what Comrade Browder maintains—then why did Comrade Browder and his friends have reservations to this "very satisfactory" finally amended form of the thesis? Why have they maintained their reservations until this day? Certainly you don't have reservations to something with which you agree!

The Party membership and the revolutionary workers demand a clear answer to the following questions:

1. Was not the thesis introduced by Comrade Bukharin to the VI Congress—which comrade Browder declares was so wrong and defective that it had to be "amended"—was not this thesis approved by the Russian delegation against the protests of Lominadze, etc.?
2. If Comrade Bukharin represented a right-wing viewpoint at the VI Congress why did the Russian Polburo issue a declaration during the Congress to the effect that there were no differences and that there was no right wing in the Polburo?
3. Why did Comrade Browder and the minority of the American Delegation vote against the motion of Comrade Lovestone to endorse the declaration of the Russian Polburo (and of the Seniore Konvent) about there being no differences and against speculation?
4. Is it not a fact that the amendments proposed by Lozovsky, Foster, Browder, etc. to change the line of the thesis were rejected by the Congress?
5. Why—if the thesis in its final form was satisfactory to them—did Comrade Browder, and with him the whole minority of the delegation (Johnstone, Cannon, Siskind, etc.) bring up their disagreements with it in the form of public reservations?
6. Why—if Comrade Bukharin represented a Right-Wing line at the VI World Congress—did not comrade Stalin come to the Congress to make at least one speech criticizing Bukharin's errors and laying down the "correct" line? Why such eloquent silence on such important questions?

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