

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

The Workers' Advocate Supplement



50¢

Vol. 2 #4

VOICE OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY, USA

April 15, 1986

France and the New Line of the 7th Congress

More on the backward turn in the line of the international communist movement at the Seventh Congress of the C.I. in 1935

Last year, our Party began publishing material on the backward turn in the line of the international communist movement in the mid-1930s. Up to the mid-1930's, the Communist International had followed a revolutionary line. But in the mid-1930s a change took place that was formally marked by the Seventh Congress of the CI of July-August 1935. The "new tactical orientation" from this well-trumpeted Congress undermined the Leninist stand of the world communist movement, weakened the struggle against the world fascist offensive, and opened the way for liquidationist pressures on the communist parties.

This issue of the Supplement contains materials on the line and activities of the French Communist Party (PCF) during the period 1934-1937 and a speech on the Seventh Congress itself.

The experience of the PCF is important because it offers an excellent illustration of what the Seventh Congress of the CI actually stood for. We did not select the PCF on an arbitrary basis, as just one among many communist parties. No, the new stand of the PCF in the mid-1930s was considered a model by the leadership of the CI at that time. The Seventh Congress itself urged the entire world communist movement to learn from and apply the lessons of the French example. And indeed, to this day, there exists a widespread myth that the experience of the PCF and the Popular Front government in the 1930s was a brilliant example of the success of the new orientation of the 7th Congress of the CI.

The study of the **practical application** of the line of the 7th Congress is important because many of the **words** spoken at the Congress were deceptive and just demagogical window-dressing. This was not a Congress where the new line was proclaimed in an open, straightforward manner. No, the new line was

presented with the utmost in confusion-mongering and trickery. Any serious study of the line of the 7th Congress thus requires cutting through the demagogy and penetrating to the real policies being advocated.

What Does the French Experience in the Mid-1930's Show?

The study of the French experience verifies that there was indeed a change in the line of the world communist movement in the mid-1930s. Up to that time, the PCF had a revolutionary stand and had been following a generally Marxist-leninist policy, although it suffered from certain rigidities in theory which did not give it enough tactical flexibility to deal with the complicated events of the mid-1930s.

In this period, the PCF was faced with mobilizing the working class response to the economic and political crisis of the great depression and with the task of meeting the challenge of the fascist offensive. The bourgeois Republic and the traditional capitalist parties were in acute crisis. The work-

IN THIS ISSUE

The French Communist Party — 1934-1937	4
Background Notes on the French Working Class Movement in the 1930's	13
On the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.....	24

ing class and the rest of the working people were in ferment. At the same time, Germany had fallen into the hands of Hitler, and there was also a major fascist movement active in France and the threat of a fascist coup. All these events were causing a crisis among the reformists in France, shaking their hold on the working people, and giving rise to leftward motion among the workers under social-democratic influence. To equip the party to deal with this complicated situation, the PCF had to refine its tactics.

But it is not just a mere adjustment in tactics that took place in 1934-35. Rather, the revolutionary core of the PCF's line was dropped. The study below shows the following things:

*** The PCF recognized the importance of the fight against the fascist offensive. But the new line coupled this with an impermissible sacrifice, with the abandonment of the revolutionary perspective. Instead of using the anti-fascist struggle to advance the revolutionary movement, the PCF limited its outlook to the defense of the bourgeois Republic. Work for the socialist revolution was set aside. But the non-revolutionary struggle against fascism turned out to be just a mess of empty words

*** The PCF shifted away from the Leninist conception of united front tactics to a reformist view. It abandoned the idea of using united front tactics to win the masses to revolutionary struggle and communism. It now focused united front work on coming to agreement at any cost with the social-democratic and liberal bourgeois leaderships. It dropped its emphasis on revolutionary work among the rank-and-file working masses — work that must be

pursued fervently irrespective of whether or not temporary agreements are reached with the reformist leaders at the top — to one of toning down the work to what was acceptable to the reformist and liberal leaders.

*** This came alongside a change in the fundamental attitude of the PCF towards social-democracy. The social-democrats — who were mired in class collaboration with the bourgeoisie and were thus opponents of any revolutionary mass struggle against the fascist danger — were now promoted as stalwart fighters against fascism and as fraternal defenders of the cause of the proletariat.

*** In proclaiming the tactics for a "popular front", the 7th Congress tried to make it appear as if it was just reiterating the long-standing communist tactics for such fronts which concern the proletariat's alliance with the non-proletarian working masses. But in fact, in the name of uniting with "the middle strata", the new line was advocating a bloc with the bourgeois liberal parties. The French example confirmed this, as the PCF's "Popular Front", forged in this period, included an anti-fascist bloc with the liberal bourgeois Radical party, one of the main bourgeois ruling parties.

*** Accommodation with the social-democratic and liberal leaders became the alpha and omega of PCF policy. The PCF made one concession after another to their reformist and liberal outlook and bourgeois class interests. The masses and their struggles were now subordinated to what was acceptable to the reformists and liberals. The PCF shifted its emphasis away from mass struggle to electoralism and parliamentary maneuvering in support of the liberal and social-democratic parties. No matter what treachery these forces committed, the PCF did not abandon its support for them.

The Workers' Advocate Supplement



Supplement to
The Workers' Advocate
Theoretical-Political Newspaper
of the Central Committee
of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA

Editorial correspondence:

The Workers' Advocate Supplement
Box 11942, Ontario St. Stn., Chicago, IL 60611

Orders and subscriptions:

Marxist-Leninist Publications
Box 11972, Ontario St. Stn., Chicago, IL 60611

Rates: From vendor, 50¢

Via 1st class mail: \$1 for single copy, \$12 for year.
(U.S., Canada, Mexico)

ISSN 0882-6366

The Workers' Advocate



**Theoretical-Political
Newspaper of the Central Committee
of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA**

- Editorial correspondence: **The Workers' Advocate**
Box 11942 Ontario Street Stn. Chicago, IL 60611
- All orders and subscriptions: **M-L Publications**
Box 11972 Ontario Street Stn. Chicago, IL 60611
- Rates: From vendor: 25¢
Via 1st class mail: 75¢ for single copy
\$4.50 for 6 issues, \$9.00 for 12 issues (U.S., Canada)

ISSN 0276-363X

*** Besides its fundamental task of organizing the class-conscious workers, the PCF also faced the need of drawing the semi-proletarian and petty bourgeois sections of the working people into the class struggle. These non-proletarian working people were losing their faith in the bourgeois Republic and bourgeois rule, some looking towards the socialist proletariat while the fascists sought to attract others. The PCF faced the task of drawing these strata of the working people into the struggle against the capitalists who were oppressing them. But instead, the PCF appealed to them by adapting itself to petty bourgeois prejudices. It embraced the standard of petty-bourgeois nationalism, which has long been a particularly strong affliction in France and which had enchained the working masses to the bourgeoisie. And the PCF took this cause up with a specially shameless enthusiasm.

*** The change in line at the 7th Congress also brought with it the curse of liquidationist tendencies with regard to party-building. It marked the beginning of the corrosion of the communist party itself. Party fractions in the trade unions were given up, the theory of neutrality of the trade unions in the political struggle of the proletariat was endorsed, and the PCF made a number of efforts to merge itself with the social-democratic party on a disgusting liquidationist platform.

The Result of the New Line

The result of these changes in the PCF line in the mid-1930's was grievous for the working class movement and the cause of the proletarian revolution in France.

It meant the frittering away of the possibilities that were created by the huge upsurge among the working masses during the mid-1930's.

A great wave of proletarian struggle had been shaping up in France. A series of important strikes against the miserable conditions of the depression broke out. The militant battles against fascism in 1934 struck some hard-hitting blows. Then the unprecedented strike wave of 1936 brought millions of additional workers into motion all across France.

But the PCF worked to subordinate the movement to its alliance with the social-democrats and liberals, to preserve the status quo, to restore the faith of the masses in the bourgeois Republic, and to prevent any development that would scare away the liberal bourgeoisie. The PCF did not use this upsurge to consolidate forces for waging revolutionary struggle and did not teach the masses that only gains backed up by the organization of the working class and its willingness to fight were durable.

Thus the fruits of the upsurge were frittered away and France fell under a renewed offensive from capitalist reaction. By 1938 the Popular Front government, to which the PCF had sacrificed the integrity and force of the mass movement, had fall-

en; it had accomplished little for the working class except opposing the mass struggle with a "left" veneer. Now that the proletarian upsurge had been blunted and paralyzed, the bourgeoisie had no further need for the Popular Front government. France faced the continuing depression and the imminent threat of Nazi takeover with a traditional, corrupt series of bourgeois governments. At the outbreak of World War II, the French government acted to suppress the worker's movement while having no spirit to fight the Nazi armies.

It would take the resistance to the Nazi occupation of France to give rise to another powerful, sustained nationwide revolutionary struggle among the working masses. The PCF was able to build up a powerful movement, which bore the brunt of the partisan struggle in France against the Nazis and was the main force in the famous French resistance.

But here too, despite the defeat of fascism -- important though it was -- the 7th Congress line, which the PCF was thoroughly imbued with, meant that this victory could not be used for the purpose of strengthening the socialist revolutionary movement. Tremendous revolutionary energy was displayed in the resistance. But the PCF limited its perspective to the consolidation of a bourgeois-democratic regime after the war and once again threw its effects into calming down the mass upsurge. But that is another story, one which we have already written about earlier. (See "On the Orientation of the French CP (1944-1956)" in the collection "In Defense of Marxism-Leninism -- On Problems in the Orientation of the International Communist Movement in the Period from the End of World War II to the Death of Stalin" published in The Workers' Advocate, May 1, 1984).

The materials in this issue of the Supplement include:

1) A speech on the line and activities of the PCF during 1934-37. It was given at the 2nd Congress of the MLP, USA held in the fall of 1983 and has been edited for publication in line with subsequent inner-party discussion.

2) The document "Background Notes on the French Working Class Movement in the 1930's" which gives additional information on what was going on in France in the period.

3) A speech on line of the 7th Congress of the CI. It was given at the 2nd Congress of the MLP, USA and has been edited for publication in line with subsequent inner-party discussion.

A future issue of the Supplement will contain certain reference materials of interest for which there was not room in this issue, such as

a) A brief account of the battles against the fascists in France during February 1934;

b) The program of the People's Front in France, 1936; and

c) The text of the proposals for merger of the communists and social-democrats into a single party exchanged between the PCF and the SFIO in 1937. <

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY -- 1934-37

Based on a speech given at the Second Congress of the MLP, USA in fall 1983.

The French Communist Party (PCF) was held up at the 7th Congress of the Comintern as a model for all the parties. In the period prior to the 7th Congress, the CI leadership was involved with and endorsed the developments and changes in the line of the PCF. And in the period after the 7th Congress the PCF was promoted as a model for the application of the line of the 7th Congress. An examination of the PCF practice in the period from 1934 to 1937, therefore, is an excellent test of what the line of the 7th Congress actually was, what it meant in practice.

A Revolutionary Policy -- Up to Early 1934

To begin, it appears that, in essentials, the PCF followed a generally Marxist-Leninist line up through the spring of 1934. It had a revolutionary perspective, and a strategy and tactics based, in this period of deep crisis, on the prospect of the breakup of the bourgeois economic and political order and the rise of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat.

The PCF upheld the path of Soviet revolution. It had a revolutionary stand opposed to the bourgeois state, and it fought against the fascist movement which was being fostered by the bourgeoisie and protected by the state. The PCF also fought against social-democracy, seeking to win over to communism the sections of the working masses who were under the influence of the socialist party in France, the Section Francaise de l'Internationale Ouvriere (SFIO). As well, the PCF had an internationalist policy, as shown by such things as its opposition to French imperialist war preparations, its exposure of the fraud that France was only militarizing in order to oppose German fascism, and its struggle against French domination of the colonies.

At the same time, there were certain rigidities in the theoretical positions of the PCF, although it appears that their practice was often better than their theorizing.

For example, they seemed to have had a simplistic conception that the crisis of capitalism and the development of revolution would develop in a straight line and that the workers would just sweep aside the discredited social-democrats and follow the PCF to Soviet power without complicated twists and turns requiring maneuvering on the part of the communist party.

Take another example. The PCF correctly stood against the petty-bourgeois democratic illusions that glorified the French bourgeois Republic as the bastion against the royalists and reactionaries. But the PCF had a tendency, in denouncing the bourgeois Republic, to lay stress in its agitation on

that it was "bourgeois-democratic" or "democratic" (used pretty much interchangeably) and then to denounce "democracy". Their terminology created confusion on the fight for democratic rights by identifying "democracy" with defense of the bourgeois Republic, which they rejected. And the way they posed that only two paths were possible -- fascism or socialism -- tended to negate the necessary analysis of the twists and turns of the struggle in the period before it reaches the situation where revolution and counterrevolution face each other directly. As well, there were rigidities in the PCF's conception of united front tactics, but we will touch on this later.

Despite these rigidities, it appears that in practice the PCF did apply united front tactics, was able to maneuver, and did organize to fight the fascists and rally the masses in the struggle for various democratic rights. On the whole, their line and practice seemed to be correct and revolutionary. But the developments in the 1930s brought to the fore the question of overcoming their rigidities and adjusting their tactics in order to strengthen the Party and organize the working masses.

The Anti-Fascist Battles of February 1934

The famous mass anti-fascist struggles in February 1934 show something of the correctness of the PCF's revolutionary work.

On February 6, the French royalists and fascists organized mass demonstrations which attacked the Chamber of Deputies in an initial attempt at a fascist coup d'etat. The PCF threw itself into the spontaneous working class demonstrations against the fascists. It called for and organized battles with the fascists on February 9 and participated in the 24-hour general strike called by the social-democrats on February 12. Four million workers participated in the strike, and one and a half million joined the demonstrations.

The success of the actions were due in part to the work of the PCF, which vigorously fought the sabotage of the social-democrats and the reformist union leaders. Hundreds of thousands of workers who supported the SFIO participated in demonstrations and street fighting led by the PCF, and these rank-and-file workers began to take up the PCF slogans. It is reported that the slogan for "Soviet power" was especially popular. It can be said that the PCF passed this first major test of struggle against fascism in France with flying colors; red colors.

The Struggle Against Doriot

In this period, beginning in January and extending through the spring of 1934, there was an interesting and rather significant struggle inside the PCF over the line for the united front.

A PCF Central Committee member by the name of

Doriot jumped out to oppose the Party's united front policy. The PCF was indeed faced with a situation in which it was essential to re-adjust its tactics. It had to have the necessary flexibility to deal with the threat of fascist takeover at a time which was not yet ripe for an immediate proletarian insurrection, and it had to know how to push forward the leftward-moving elements among rank-and-file workers around the SFIO, many of whom were increasingly dissatisfied with social-democracy. However, Doriot did not stand for such a re-adjustment but for throwing away the revolutionary spirit behind communist united front tactics. It appears that in this inner-party struggle, Doriot stood for conciliation with social-democracy, while the PCF leadership justly fought against illusions in social-democracy, particularly in the phrasemongering wing of social-democracy.

The arguments in this debate are a bit hard to follow. One has to not just see the words in which the arguments were posed but what they actually meant.

In brief, the context in which this debate took place was as follows: The PCF was carrying out a policy of what in their language was a united front exclusively from below and it was denouncing calling for a united front from above. It was refusing to adopt, in theory, the concept of an appeal for a united front agreement with the national social-democratic leadership, but as we shall see, in practice, the real question revolved around what sort of agreement was judged permissible with the social-democrats. The PCF based this refusal on its analysis that the SFIO was breaking up, and that such appeals at that time would only assist the "left"-demagogic wing of the SFIO to hold in check the leftward move of their rank-and-file members towards the PCF.

We have basically only PCF leader Thorez's speeches on the controversy with Doriot. According to Thorez, Doriot advocated that the social-democratic leaders were capable of and willing to fight fascism. Thorez, the leader of the PCF, responded: No, the social-democratic leaders want to maintain "order" and "defend the republic" not against the fascists but against the danger of socialist revolution.

Doriot called for a united front from above with what he called the sincere "left" social-democratic leaders. Thorez responded: Only a united front from below. There is no difference in principle between the "left" and right social-democratic leaders. An appeal for a united front from above to the "lefts" would only play into their hands. They would use this as a means to cut off the leftward move of the socialist workers.

Doriot asserted that it was only the lack of working class unity in Germany that allowed fascism to come to power. Thorez responded that to pursue things in this way was to place the responsibility on both the communists and social-democrats, while in fact the social-democrats and their line bore

The French Communist Party — 1934-37

Speech at 2nd Congress of the MLP, USA

A Revolutionary Policy — Up to Early 1934.....	4
The Anti-Fascist Battles of February 1934.....	4
The Struggle Against Doriot.....	4
A Theoretical Rigidity on United Front Policy.....	6
Ivry Conference — The Beginning of the Turn to the Right.....	6
The United Front Agreement with the SFIO.....	8
The PCF Extends Its Hand to the Liberal Bourgeoisie.....	8
The November 1934 Plenum — Continuing the Turn to the Right.....	9
Merging the PCF and SFIO Trade Unions.....	10
The People's Front Government and the Strike Movement of the Workers.....	10
The People's Front Government on Other Questions...11	
War and Peace.....	12
Another Proposal for Merger with the SFIO.....	12
Abandoning the Revolutionary Perspective.....	12

Background Notes on the French Working Class Movement in the 1930's

I. The Beginning of the 1930s.....	13
II. 1932 to February 1934.....	14
III. Prelude to the February Days, 1934.....	14
IV. The Anti-Fascist Battles of February 1934....15	
The Actions of February 9.....	16
The General Strike of February 12.....	16
V. February 1934 to the United Front Against Fascism Agreement Between the PCF and SFIO in July 1934.....	17
VI. Toward Alliance with the Radical Party — Mid-1934 to the Election of the People's Front Government in May 1936....18	
VII. People's Front Government At Its Height — June 1936 - June 1937.....	20
1. The Strike Movement.....	20
2. Were the Fascist Bands Dissolved?.....	21
3. The Spanish Civil War and "Non-Intervention".....	21
4. French Colonialism.....	21
5. Economic Program of the PF Government....	22
VIII. The People's Front Drags On and Collapses — June 1937 to the Fall of 1938.....	22

sole responsibility for the victory of fascism in Germany.

It appears that at the heart of the debate with Doriot was the question of whether to switch to a conciliatory stand towards social-democracy. While the PCF leadership was correct in rejecting Doriot's rightist views, at the same time, there was something strange about Thorez's arguments and indeed in the general terminology used by the PCF on the question of the united front. This was connected to a theoretical rigidity in the approach of the PCF to the question of the united front.

A Theoretical Rigidity on United Front Policy

It appears that when the PCF leaders denounced the united front from above they were in fact denouncing some kind of general all-embracing agreement with the leadership of the SFIO, an agreement that apparently implied making major concessions to social-democracy.

On the other hand, when the PCF talked of the united front exclusively from below, they apparently meant not only work among the rank-and-file social-democratic workers, and not only appeals to and agreements with the basic local organizations of the SFIO, but also appeals to and agreements with higher levels of the SFIO, extending even up to the top leadership.

Thus earlier, from December 1932 through February 1933, Thorez had sent a number of letters to the SFIO leaders agreeing to their proposal for joint public meetings, and apparently there were some direct negotiations between the two parties on this proposal. But the SFIO had broken off the talks. Again on March 6, 1933, the PCF had published an open letter addressed to the "socialist workers" and to the "administrative commission" of the SFIO proposing a "national day of demonstrations" for the immediate demands of the workers and for aid to the German workers who were fighting fascism.

Again, during the February 1934 anti-fascist battles, the PCF had not limited itself to appeals to the rank-and-file socialist workers alone. Appeals were made to the local and regional committees of the SFIO and the reformist CGT trade union center. There were negotiations between the leaderships of the PCF, SFIO and CGT on joint action. The PCF, while not concluding an agreement, joined the CGT-called February 12 general strike. And the PCF formed at least a few joint coordinating committees with local and regional bodies of the SFIO.

As well, at the 7th Comintern Congress, Thorez claimed that the PCF had issued some 22 appeals to the SFIO leaders since 1924.

From all this, it appears that what the PCF called the united front exclusively from below is actually more like Leninist tactics of the united front. This includes laying emphasis on appealing to and organizing the rank-and-file workers for joint actions, while also at times appealing to higher levels of the reformist organizations with

the aim of assisting the rank and file to come over to the communists, isolating the social-democratic diehards, and using any agreement for joint action to advance the mass struggle.

The strange terminology of the PCF seems to have been accompanied by theoretical confusion.

For example, take the assertion that it is wrong to appeal for a united front agreement with the social-democratic leaders at a time when the social-democratic organization is in crisis for fear that this will create illusions in the "left" leaders. Such a view is theoretically incorrect. Any united front appeal holds the danger of creating illusions. But frequently, a time of crisis in the social-democratic organization is precisely the right time to make such appeals. The aim is to bring the rank and file into joint action through which the communists can win the workers over to the path of struggle, to the path of revolution and communism. The question in France turned most of all on what the content of a united front appeal should be. But apparently this question was pushed into the background in favor of general theoretical arguments about appeals from above in general.

It would seem, then, that here we find another theoretical rigidity of the PCF. It wrongly denounced the united front from above on general principle. As well, the effect of their arguments was to regard any type of united front from above as being incompatible with the united front from below. It would seem that the failure to correct these rigidities is, in the realm of theory, something that facilitated the later rightist errors proclaimed under the banner of a united front from above "at any cost". Thus when the PCF took up the banner of a united front from above "at any cost", there was a drop in the work with the socialist rank-and-file and, what is more, the content of the work "from below" was no longer guided by the aim of mobilizing the socialist workers into revolutionary activity but trimmed to what was acceptable to the social-democratic bosses.

(As to what happened to Doriot, he was expelled from the PCF in June 1934 and eventually went over to the fascists. In October 1935 he joined forces with the bourgeois reactionary Laval in the Senate elections. In the spring of 1936 he formed the Parti Populaire Français, which is reported to be the only fascist organization to gain any influence among the peasants. But this party quickly declined, as did the other fascist groups. He apparently joined the Nazis when they occupied France.)

Ivry Conference — The Beginning of the Turn to the Right

This brings us to the Ivry conference of the PCF, held in June 1934. With the acuteness of the crisis in France, this conference was faced with the task of sharpening the Party's tactics for the anti-fascist struggle. Among other things, this called for doing away with the rigidities in various of the

theoretical ideas of the PCF. But this is not what the Ivry Conference did; instead, it marked the beginning of the right turn in the line of the PCF.

The PCF trimmed its horizons merely to the fight in defense of bourgeois-democracy against fascism, obscuring the socialist perspective and the need for revolutionary means of struggle against fascism. It watered down the independent class policy of the proletariat, instead adapting itself to petty-bourgeois illusions prejudices. It embraced nationalism. And the PCF changed its united front policy in a direction of conciliation with social-democracy.

The Ivry conference laid a new, and a great, stress on the democratic struggle and democratic demands. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this per se. Indeed, in the situation in France, the struggle against the fascist movement was the decisive task of the hour. But alongside this new emphasis, the PCF leaders showed that they had seriously flawed conceptions about the democratic struggle and related questions.

From the theoretical side, the rigidities of the PCF's conceptions during the previous period appear to have left an opening for these new errors. For example, as we have noted, the PCF's terminology had the tendency to talk about "democracy" in general and equate it with the defense of the Republic. When the PCF began to put emphasis on the democratic struggle in its agitation, it did not correct this confused terminology; this opened the way towards taking up the defense of the Republic. The result was a weakening of their stand towards bourgeois democracy. This was a serious mistake at a time when the bourgeois Republic in France, and the party most associated with the bourgeois Republic in the minds of the masses, namely, the liberal bourgeois Radicals, were getting discredited among large sections of the masses.

As well, the PCF tended to not explain the relationship of the democratic struggle to the socialist revolution. Instead, their arguments stressed such things as that the masses did **not**, at that moment support Soviet power but **did**, on the other hand, support democracy and would fight to defend it against fascism. Similarly, they emphasized the argument that the democratic struggle would rally 12-15 million Frenchmen, whereas the socialist revolution could only rally 3 million proletarians.

It is true that burning political issues, such as the fight against fascism, arouse large masses of working people and, in the proper conditions, bring them into struggle against the bourgeoisie. It is true that the vanguard of the working masses cannot go into the decisive battle alone. But the Ivry Conference counterposed the burning issue of the day, the struggle against fascisms, to the revolution.

The arguments at Ivry relied on the PCF's mechanical conception of the socialist revolution, which detached it from the class struggle on many fronts that led up to it. This conception made it difficult to see the precise role of the anti-fascist

struggle in the mass ferment leading to revolution. And these arguments at Ivry indicated that this rigidity was now even worse, but this time not from the angle of denigrating the democratic struggle but from the angle of throwing aside the socialist revolution. Instead of showing how an effective anti-fascist struggle had to be waged by means that broke out of the framework of the bourgeois Republic, instead of showing how this struggle both required revolutionary means and could be used to help organize the revolutionary forces, the perspective was put forth of simply fighting for the bourgeois-democratic Republic.

These arguments also went against the fact that the masses belief in bourgeois-democracy was being shaken in this crisis and instead presented reinforcing these beliefs as the path against fascism. Thus it was presented that revolutionary slogans were of no value since only the proletarians supported them. This not only meant ignoring the broad ferment that existed, but also meant belittling the importance of the socialist proletariat in favor of appealing to traditional petty-bourgeois prejudices. It was of course of great importance that the class-conscious proletarians rally the poor peasants and the lower petty bourgeoisie to its side. But the concept of building up the independent proletarian movement, and using its strength to lead the non-proletarian working people into the struggle on the economic and political fronts, became obscured. Instead, the PCF fostered the mood of watering down the proletariat's independent stand, abandoning socialist agitation, and pandering to the prejudices of the petty-bourgeoisie.

In this regards, the Ivry conference began to promote nationalism. For the first time, the PCF officially raised the slogan of "We love our country." The PCF also began to embrace traditional petty-bourgeois sentimentalism about the French revolutionary heritage of the 18th and 19th century, portraying it in a nationalist spirit. With this agitation, the path of the October Socialist Revolution and its proletarian internationalism were pushed into the background in favor of French national traditions. At the same time, the class distinction between the bourgeois democratic revolution of 1789 and the proletarian socialist revolution of the contemporary era began to be blurred.

Finally, it was at the Ivry conference that the PCF suddenly changed its united front tactic to launch an all-out push for unity from above with the social-democratic leaders. This was made into the decisive task upon which the fate of the French working class hung. But there was absolutely no explanation given for why only a month earlier it had been claimed that the united front from above spelled disaster and now it offered the only promise of success. It was simply repeated over and over again that the united front from above must be achieved "at all costs".

The United Front Agreement With the SFIO

Within a month, the PCF indeed concluded a formal united front agreement with the SFIO leadership. Depending upon its provisions and how these provisions worked out in practice, there was nothing wrong in principle with appealing for and concluding an agreement with the SFIO. But the joint actions agreed to in this agreement were quite limited and toned down. And to achieve this agreement it seemed that the PCF had to give up too many concessions.

This pact called for joint demonstrations and meetings against the fascist movement. But this was the **only** united mass action it entailed. There was no agreement for a common front in strike struggles against the capitalists or the government. Actually, the pact was oriented especially towards laying the basis for a common electoral front between the PCF and the SFIO.

To achieve this agreement, the PCF had to grant the SFIO a series of significant concessions.

The PCF gave up its demands for joint actions on a wider scale. According to a favorable article in the Comintern journal, while the SFIO agreed to adopt certain methods of struggle (apparently demonstrations), the PCF agreed to limit itself to methods of struggle acceptable to the SFIO leadership. What this also meant was that the nature and spirit of demonstrations would be curtailed.

Moreover, the agreement meant that the PCF essentially gave up the principle of the right to criticize the line and leadership of the social-democrats. The spirit of the pact, despite words about freedom of agitation, was that there was no longer going to be serious criticism of the social-democrats. For example, prior to the pact there had been talk of been common meetings where socialists and communists would debate what path the workers were to follow. But this was explicitly ruled out by the united front agreement. The pact held, in essence, that there would be complete freedom to give one's views, provided that no one from another party was around to hear them.

In subsequent months there were frequent exchanges of criticism between the PCF and the SFIO leaderships. Does this mean that this concession to the social-democrats became a dead letter? Hardly. It is rather the case that the PCF agreed to change the character and content of its criticism of social-democracy. This is the conclusion we are led to by examining how the PCF carried out its subsequent criticism of the SFIO leadership.

A change in the tone of the PCF's criticism of the social-democrats was most likely necessary, but the PCF also gave up the cutting edge of this criticism. Instead of learning how to contrast communist class struggle with reformist treachery even in most calm appeals to the rank-and-file social-democratic workers, the PCF, even when sharp words were exchanged with the social-democratic leadership, based its criticism was on nudging these leaders a bit. It was no longer based on the theory that social-

democracy is a bourgeois political trend in the working class but instead on the theory that social-democracy is a weaker proletarian brother of communism. Social-democracy was seen as not quite orthodox Marxism, but nonetheless a legitimate proletarian force, capable of and committed to a sincere struggle against fascism. Essentially this is the conception of social-democracy as a "middle force". It is within this context then that criticism was allowed, much as Gus Hall today, or Browder yesterday, will offer comradely criticism of the social-democratic leaders and labor bureaucrats.

This united front pact, then, clearly marks a significant departure from Marxist-Leninist positions. Not just the Marxist-Leninist teachings on the united front itself, but on social-democracy in general.

The PCF Extends Its Hand to the Liberal Bourgeoisie

The PCF leaders, however, were not content with just this agreement. Not by a long shot. They quickly began working for a parliamentary and electoral bloc with the liberal bourgeois Radical Party (RP). The PCF leaders had struck into a rich vein of fool's gold — those shortcuts to broad unity and big numbers, those alternatives to rousing the masses through the class struggle, which mesmerize every liquidator and irresistibly beckon them off into the hills to prospect in the wilderness of social-democracy and liberal laborism.

In the fall of 1934, the PCF journals began to talk of extending the united front of the working class to a people's front to include "la France moyen" — the French middle classes. The PCF did not use scientific language concerning the classes involved, and it did not emphasize the specific need of allying with the poor peasants, urban working people, etc. No, instead it used the appropriately ambiguous and rubbery term, "middle classes". In a September 1934 *L'Humanite* article, Thorez declared that the immediate demands of the middle classes are, for the most part, "the specific demands of communism". How's that for buttering up the "middle classes?" You have nothing to fear, we communists are just middle class too.

In practice, this quest for the "middle classes" translated into a courtship with the Radical Party. In October Thorez raised the possibility that Radical politicians could cosign parliamentary agreements between the PCF and the SFIO. And Thorez attended the Radical congress, held in Nantes in October, and delivered there a speech proposing a People's Front for "Liberty, Work and Peace".

Now what type of party was the Radical Party? It was a liberal bourgeois party whose main votes came from the peasantry. Let us take a moment to look at what the Radical Party was like.

The Radical Party was founded in 1875. It seems that it split in 1893 into two wings, the Radicals and the Radical Socialists. In 1901 the party was

apparently refounded with the official name of "The Republican Radical and Radical Socialist Party". In World War I, its notorious leader Georges Clemenceau was an ultra-chauvinist who stood for war to the bitter end and took over leadership of the French government in the midst of the war because, in comparison to his brutal militarism, the previous government was a bunch of weak-kneed vacillators. Clemenceau lost the 1919 elections. Again in 1924 the Radicals headed the government until 1928. From June 1932 to the fascist coup attempt in February 1934, the Radicals headed the government in a so-called "left bloc" with the SFIO. It presided over austerity measures against the workers and repression of the communists. At the same time it refused to lift a finger against the fascists, even when they were storming the Chamber of Deputies. In the face of the fascist demonstrations, the Radicals resigned in the name of avoiding "bloodshed."

The organizational structure of the Radicals is illuminating. Unlike many political parties of various trends — from the communists even to, to a certain extent, the Democratic Party in the U.S. today — the Radicals had no cadre organization. Thus, outside of elected officials such as mayors in rural towns and villages (who of course were lawyers, kulaks, etc.) the RP was equivalent to its parliamentary group. These parliamentarians were essentially petty bourgeois (lawyers, again, and professional politicians). This was different from the right-wing bourgeois parties in France whose parliamentarians tended to be the actual big proprietors and rentiers themselves.

But this raises the question: since the RP did not have a cadre force or organized mass base whose dues supported the top party functionaries, and since the RP was not led by independently wealthy men, how did the Radical leaders finance their election campaigns? There were two principal sources: industrial groups and insurance companies. These financial angels who backed the Radicals of course directly influenced and determined the stands which the Radical deputies took in the Chamber.

In short, the RP, the so-called party of "le France moyen", was a liberal bourgeois party. In the name of rallying the "middle classes," the PCF was calling for a bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie.

The November 1934 Plenum — Continuing the Turn to the Right

The November 1934 Plenum of the PCF endorsed this new line for uniting with the bourgeois liberals, which was carried out in the name of a people's front just as giving in to the social-democrats was carried out in the name of the united front. It adopted the basic slogan: "Defense of Democratic Liberties, For Bread, Liberty, and Peace". A passage from Thorez's report to the plenum captures the basic spirit and thrust of the change in line. Thorez quotes a speech by a Radical deputy in the Chamber who calls for disarming all those who are

leading France into civil war. "Agreed!" proclaims Thorez for the Central Committee. Of course Thorez claims that the Radical deputy was speaking of the fascists, but the thrust of Thorez's point is not lost. The PCF was abandoning the revolutionary perspective and was taking the side of the Radicals for maintaining "order", for class collaboration, and against militant outbursts.

The November Plenum further elaborated the tactics of the People's Front, making it clear that it was a tactic of electoral and parliamentary blocing with the Radicals. Thorez suggested that the PCF withdraw from any second round elections in which a Radical candidate was running who met only one criterion: that he renounced support for the current National Union government (in which the Radicals held cabinet posts). This was not posed as a specific tactic to defeat reactionaries in certain particular cases. Rather it was a typical expression of the tactic of the so-called "left bloc" with the liberals against the reactionary bourgeoisie.

It is noteworthy to mention here that Thorez was offering the Radicals a real plum. The October local elections had shown that the PCF's electoral support was already growing. But the Radicals (and apparently the SFIO as well) made no gains anywhere, and in some areas suffered big losses. The Radicals were losing support both for their exposure prior to the February days and further by the fact that they were participating in the reactionary National Union government. Thorez's offer of support to the Radicals was a promise to bring the masses back into the Radical fold.

At the November Plenum, Thorez also carried on with the rummaging through French pseudo-history, "discovering" in the democratic traditions of France of the 18th and 19th century the very embodiment of 20th century Marxism-Leninism. This is fully comparable to Browder's "discovery" that communism is 20th century Americanism. It seems that internationalism was no longer fashionable. For something to be acceptable it had to have a specific national, specifically French pedigree.

Finally, the November Plenum raised the call for the merger of the PCF and the SFIO into a single party of the French working class. According to Thorez, all that was needed to be done was to remove a few obstacles and organic unity could be achieved. These obstacles were to be overcome by essentially the same conditions for unity as were raised by Dimitrov at the 7th Congress of the CI the next year. We will not go into them here. And we shall soon see how these obstacles were removed. But for now it should be noted that, in the list of principal differences between the social-democrats and the communists, the ideas behind Lenin's famous 21 points (conditions for admission into the Communist International drafted under Lenin's leadership in 1920) were completely forgotten, so that there was no mention of support for the struggle to liberate the French colonies, nor of opposition to French chauvinism, and so forth.

Following the November Plenum of the PCF, in December 1934, the Executive Committee of the CI (ECCI) held an expanded Presidium meeting which was devoted to the discussion of the new developments in the line of the PCF. The Presidium was attended by leaders of major communist parties. It endorsed the changes in the line of the PCF and called on the other parties to model their own tactics upon those of the PCF. This event, as well as others, show that prior to the formal convening of the 7th Congress of the CI the ECCI was taking steps to orient the international movement upon the path of a "new line" to the right following the "advanced" French experience.

Merging the PCF and SFIO Trade Unions

Let us jump ahead to the period following the holding of the 7th Comintern Congress to see exactly where this new line led in France.

In July 1935 the PCF-led trade union center, the CGTU (General Confederation of Labor — Unitary), agreed to merge into the social-democratic trade union center, the CGT (General Confederation of Labor). In September 1935, separate congresses of the two union centers were held to ratify the merger. And in May 1936, they held the first united congress of the new CGT. As with the united front agreement with the SFIO, it appears that the PCF gave up too much to achieve this merger.

The conditions for merger included that all party fractions inside the trade unions were to be disbanded. This concession was supported and justified by Dimitrov at the 7th Congress of the CI. A further condition of the merger was that the principle of non-political trade unions, of trade union neutrality, was to be agreed to. The PCF swallowed it all and gave extravagant praise for what they called the self-sacrificing sense of duty which led several of the PCF's Central Committee members to resign from the PCF in order to retain their posts in the trade unions.

What is more, in all the discussion of the merger that we have seen, there is absolutely no talk about its political basis. On what basis is the new union to be constituted: class struggle, class collaboration, or what? Nothing is said. The sole point advanced by the PCF is that unity (i.e. merger) will mean increased numbers and, as we all know, increased numbers are supposed to mean everything, independent of what these numbers will be doing.

It should be noted that with the enormous upsurge of strikes and factory occupations, beginning at the end of May 1936, the CGT did grow by leaps and bounds. How much the merger had to do with this growth is hard to estimate. It appears that the impulse for the strike wave may have originated in a huge wave of revolt among the mostly unorganized sections of the workforce who then, after the strikes began, started joining in large numbers the existing unions. And, for example, with respect to the U.S. during this period, we have analyzed that

the upsurge in the unions was not related to the CPUSA giving up its red trade unions and fractions in the reformist unions, but rather that the CPUSA gave up the positions it had gained through years of arduous work, positions which had helped prepare the upsurge, and whose abandonment hindered the Party's work to be in a leading position in the movement. With France we are not as familiar with the conditions of the upsurge. But subsequent developments show that the PCF giving these concessions was part of their turn towards a class collaborationist policy.

The People's Front Government and the Strike Movement of the Workers

The PCF eventually concluded an electoral pact with the SFIO, the Radicals, and other lesser groups. They produced a common platform. [This platform of the People's Front is part of the reference material that will be printed in a future issue of the Supplement.]

The program of the People's Front was composed of immediate demands. First, that the fascist bands, which at that time numbered in the tens of thousands of members and included military organizations, be disarmed and disbanded. As well, it demanded that the fascists be eliminated from the government and the army. There were also a series of social and economic measures such as shorter hours of work, paid vacations and pensions for the workers, social insurance for the unemployed and public works jobs, and reform of the tax system including a progressive income tax and more taxation of the corporations.

In the spring of 1936, the People's Front won the election. The socialist leader, Blum, headed up the new government.

The PCF did not enter the government, that is, the cabinet; but this was for class collaborationist rather than principled reasons. Although the PCF got nearly as many votes as the SFIO, and got more than the Radicals, it eventually explained that its entering the government would have been too provocative and frightening to the bourgeoisie. It might have raised the dreaded specter of civil war, which had to be avoided at all costs because civil war would weaken France in the face of fascist Germany.

But, of course, the PCF gave the government its full support.

Shortly after the elections, and before the Blum government took office, the largest strike wave in French history broke out. (This was the strike movement we referred to above with respect to the merger between the PCF and SFIO unions.) It began on May 30. It brought out on strike millions of workers from all the major industries and, at its peak, had over one million workers striking simultaneously. It was a militant struggle and mainly took the form of factory occupations.

On June 4, Blum took office and within days worked out an agreement with the national manufacturers association and the CGT: this was the Matig-

non agreement. This conceded to the workers' demands for a 40-hour week, paid vacations, the right to collective bargaining and for recognizing the CGT as the workers' bargaining agent. The agreement also agreed to the negotiation of wage increases, but these were delayed and in many cases eventually denied by the capitalists. The Matignon agreement was eventually ratified by the parliament.

It appears that an appreciable section of the workers wanted to continue this struggle to win their further demands, such as for pensions. Indeed half a million coal miners went out on strike the day following the agreement and other workers continued to strike for some time. But the Blum government stationed troops at the factories, and the PCF called on the workers to end the strike.

The PCF denounced continuing the strike as being adventurous because it was frightening the French middle classes and risking estranging them from the People's Front. No doubt there was some truth in this since it is clear that the financial angels behind the Radicals, the party of the "middle classes", included the very bourgeoisie that the workers were striking against. Later, the PCF would recall the high-minded sense of national unity which led it to call the strikers back to work and actually crow that the PCF had stood for the full severity of the law of the land coming down on the head of all those who violated the "popular" unity.

With their strike wave — which was only allowed to develop for a few days — the French workers were able to win a number of major economic concessions from the bourgeoisie. But the movement held out promise beyond what was achieved. For one thing, the workers had shown that they had sufficient strength to fight for their additional economic demands. What is more, the very extension of the economic struggle could have given rise to the possibility of the workers pressing for other things such as their political demands against fascism. And had they not had their struggle cut short, the workers would have been able to gain confidence for launching further assaults against the bourgeoisie in the coming period. As it was, however, the PCF leadership was scared of the possibilities; instead of developing the fighting edge of the workers' movement, it sought to ensure stability for the government.

This experience offers an important refutation of the demagogy with which the line of the 7th Congress of the CI was posed.

It is instructive to recall that both Thorez and Dimitrov justified the blocs with the SFIO and the RP and the support for the People's Front government as a means for organizing the mass struggles of the workers and oppressed. In fact they claimed that it was the putting of the mass struggle in the center that made the People's Front government something different, and better than, the traditional "left"-center blocs of the social-democrats.

But here we see the true situation. Undoubtedly the election of the People's Front government had

some connection to the unleashing of this enormous strike movement. Certainly the workers had high hopes that they could win their demands from the new government they had just put in power. And, what is more, the workers were inspired by and more confident in the strength they had shown in electing the People's Front. But no sooner did the strikes go beyond the workers' first demands, than the PCF came out against them. In practice, the PCF counterposed support for the People's Front government against the mass struggle. This is because in essence the People's Front was a class collaborationist parliamentary coalition. And in order to maintain this precious collaboration with the French liberal bourgeoisie, the PCF turned scabs on the French working class movement.

Time showed that the only demands that the workers won were those that they fought for, not by sitting on their hands relying on the People's Front government, but through the mass struggle. The People's Front government implemented few of the demands from its own program. The only immediate demands of the People's Front program that were "granted" were those won in this strike. And even much of this the bourgeoisie was able to sabotage, withhold or take back later because the PCF and labor bureaucrats did not allow the strike movement to be carried forward.

The People's Front Government on Other Questions

If we examine the practice of the People's Front government on other questions, we find that all told it really accomplished little for the working class, while devoting itself to paralyzing and undermining the working class upsurge of the mid-1930s. Although it passed some laws on the fascists, it did not in fact disarm and disband the fascist bands, nor did it throw the fascists out of the army and government posts. The PCF from time to time mildly criticized Blum because of this, but it never stopped supporting his government.

The Blum government was a leading ideologue of the policy of non-intervention in Spain, the policy of the Anglo-American-French imperialists. This policy was conveniently adopted after the German and Italian fascists had already intervened with troops on the side of Franco and the policy was always applied only against internationalist aid to the Republican fighters in Spain. Blum actually closed the French borders with Spain to prevent internationalist aid from reaching the Republicans. The PCF criticized Blum for this, and even mobilized the masses on this issue, at least initially. But the PCF never stopped supporting Blum's People's Front government.

As we have said, the People's Front government implemented virtually nothing of its program. But, in March of 1937, the Blum government even abandoned the pretext that it intended to implement its program. Blum announced a "pause" in the program and called for austerity measures on the workers. **The**

PCF criticized Blum for this, but it never stopped supporting his People's Front government.

And finally, the Blum government resigned in June of 1937 and was replaced by another cabinet headed by the RP. This government had only the most meager pretense of association with the People's Front and was all too obviously nothing different from the archetypical "left"-center bloc.

At this point the PCF revealed the full depth of its parliamentary cretinist depravity. Thorez declared that now the PCF was prepared to enter the government because that would now prevent the workers from becoming disillusioned with the People's Front. How consistent! Originally, in order to ensure order and avoid the outbreak of class war, the PCF refused to enter the Blum government. And now the PCF requested entrance into the RP government because that might help to ensure order and prevent the workers from fighting against the government. Nevertheless, the PCF was snubbed cold by the RP and the SFIO and refused a seat on the cabinet. The PCF criticized them for this, but it never stopped giving them its full support.

War and Peace

There are two further points about the line of the PCF in this period which we must address before we conclude.

First, there is the issue of imperialist war and the question of peace.

In 1936, the PCF was in straightforward reformist positions on this front. Its basic slogans were: "Not An Armed Peace, But A Peace Without Arms" and "International Collaboration Through The League Of Nations For Peace And Collective Security". What craven illusion mongering at a time when an anti-fascist war had already broken out and was being waged just across the mountains in neighboring Spain, to say nothing of the fighting in China or of the looming general world war! What is more, their peace agitation did not mention French imperialism and it did not oppose French colonialism.

But in 1937, the PCF went from bad to worse, or worse to worst. In that year we find it supporting budget appropriations for armaments in the name of the need to defend France. And the PCF, which had already become silent instead of agitating in favor of the liberation struggle in the French colonies, began to advocate that the colonies should retain their "close relations" with the French nation lest they should fall into the hands of the Nazis. This was not agitation asking the oppressed people of the

colonies to unite with the French proletariat on the grounds of waging a common struggle against the French and Axis bourgeoisies, but merely a rationale for urging the colonial masses to accept continued domination by the French bourgeoisie.

Another Proposal for Merger with the SFIO

Finally, in July of 1937, the PCF called for an openly liquidationist merger with the social-democrats. To achieve this merger, the PCF made no demands on the SFIO. The PCF was completely willing to accept the social-democrats as they were.

It is rather the SFIO which demanded that the communists recognize, as preconditions for merger: 1) democracy throughout the party organizations; 2) sovereignty of the French party from all international organizations; and 3) independence of the French party from all governments.

These were, of course, catchwords for eliminating democratic centralism, breaking ties with the CI, and throwing up obstacles to support for the socialist Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Thorez replied, "D'accord!" (Agreed!) These demands, said Thorez, are no roadblocks; in fact, the PCF has always stood for these things, and stood for them more firmly than even the SFIO! Let us unite immediately. If we can't arrive at a merger agreement on the national level right away, then by all means let us have the local organizations start holding their meetings together without delay. [The PCF and SFIO proposals for merger are part of the reference materials that will be printed in a future issue of the Supplement.]

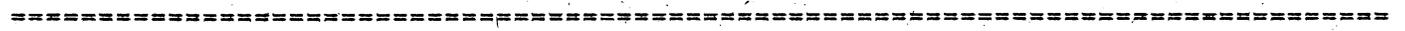
This proposal for merger with the SFIO eventually failed. With the public trials in the Soviet Union against anti-Soviet conspirators, the SFIO, and social-democratic parties throughout Europe, recoiled against the communists. Merger talks in France and most other countries collapsed after this.

Abandoning the Revolutionary Perspective

To sum up, the line and activities of the PCF in the period from 1934 to 1937 confirm that the orientation provided by the 7th Congress of the Comintern abandoned the revolutionary perspective.

The new line placed preservation of the status quo before all else and revealed a deadly fear of any radical developments. From the new line, the socialist revolution and the class perspective simply disappeared.

<>



BACKGROUND NOTES ON THE FRENCH WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT IN THE 1930'S

The following notes are compiled from a study done by comrades of the MLP on the working class movement in France during the 1930s. This study involved a survey of the Comintern journal, the Communist International; a study of the collected works of Maurice Thorez, the general secretary of the French Communist Party (PCF) during this period; and a study of several books, both pro-CI and strictly bourgeois.

These notes outline the developments in France during the 1930s. Although these notes are by no means complete, they provide certain background information that may help comrades to understand the conditions in which PCF began to change its line and to see the significance of the different turns in the line of the PCF which are explained in the accompanying speech presented to the 2nd Congress of the MLP.

I. The Beginning of the 1930s

France entered the 1930s as a modern monopoly capitalist country. It was not as highly industrialized as Britain, the United States or Germany. The majority of the French population was still rural, and over a third of the population were still peasants. At the same time, petty industry predominated. Of the 17.8 million employed in industry some 11.8 million worked in establishments of 5 or less workers. Nearly half of the establishments were in fact single handed.

The part of the industrial proletariat concentrated in shops of over 500 workers numbered about 1.5 million. The two French trade union centers, the CGTU led by the PCF and the reformist CGT associated with the social democratic party (the Section Francaise de l'Internationale Ouvriere or SFIO), each had a few hundred thousand members.

France was dominated by a strong finance capitalist section. It was a major imperialist power. By 1930 the French capitalists invested 15% of the French national wealth in other countries. At the beginning of the 1930s France had the largest standing army in Europe.

The world capitalist economic crisis which broke out with a vengeance in 1929 did not immediately affect France. But by late in 1931 France too was in the grips of the economic crisis. Between 1931 and 1935 unemployment tripled. Between 1931 and 1934 wages were cut by an average of 24%. As well, an agrarian crisis broke out, ruining broad masses of the small and middle peasants.

Side by side with the economic crisis, France began to be gripped by a political crisis. The working class movement began to develop and, after the early years of the 1930s, step by step the PCF's

influence grew.

(Note that in December 1920 at the famous Congress of Tours, by a large majority, the SFIO had voted to affiliate to the 3rd International and form the PCF. The reformists split off and continued under the name of the SFIO. In the next decade, through the process of transforming itself into a fighting party and the vicissitudes of the class struggle, the PCF lost nearly half of its numerical strength. The onset of the Great Depression did not immediately result in growth for the Party. According to Maurice Thorez, who was the PCF general secretary for much of the 1930s, membership declined from 39,000 in May 1930 to 30,000 in March 1932. In the 1932 elections PCF votes declined to 800,000 from the 1,085,000 votes received in 1928. After this, PCF membership and influence again began to grow.)

At the same time a series of fascist leagues emerged and, with the direct assistance of the bourgeoisie and the various governments, a royalist and fascist movement grew.

And, as we shall see, one government after another collapsed and the government ministries frequently changed hands from one party to another.

Background Notes on the French Working Class Movement in the 1930's

I.	The Beginning of the 1930s.....	13
II.	1932 to February 1934.....	14
III.	Prelude to the February Days, 1934.....	14
IV.	The Anti-Fascist Battles of February 1934....	15
	The Actions of February 9.....	16
	The General Strike of February 12.....	16
V.	February 1934 to the United Front Against Fascism Agreement Between the PCF and SFIO in July 1934.....	17
VI.	Toward Alliance with the Radical Party — Mid-1934 to the Election of the People's Front Government in May 1936....	18
VII.	People's Front Government At Its Height — June 1936 - June 1937.....	20
	1. The Strike Movement.....	20
	2. Were the Fascist Bands Dissolved?.....	21
	3. The Spanish Civil War and "Non-Intervention".....	21
	4. French Colonialism.....	21
	5. Economic Program of the PF Government....	22
VIII.	The People's Front Drags On and Collapses — June 1937 to the Fall of 1938.....	22

II. 1932 to February 1934

In this turbulent situation, national elections were held in June 1932. They revealed a turn to the left. The liberal bourgeois party, the Radicals (RP), backed by the social democratic party, the SFIO, again won power.

A few remarks on the background of the liberal-social-democratic alliance:

The famous Radical Party leader Georges Clemenceau had become premier in November 1917 in the midst of World War I. He pursued a tough war policy, arresting all opponents of the inter-imperialist slaughter. He negotiated for France the infamous Versailles Treaty, which imposed an unjust, oppressive yoke on the people of the defeated countries. In 1919 the Radicals suffered a major defeat in the national elections, falling from 172 to 86 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and went into disintegration. The "left" wing radical, Herriot, was elected president of the RP and somewhat rejuvenated it. An RP-SFIO alliance won the 1924 elections. But during a financial crisis in 1926 the RP broke the alliance with the SFIO and formed a government with the coalition of right-wing parties known as the Union Nationale (UN). In 1928 the RP lost the elections and a UN government was formed. The RP nearly disintegrated again. But Daladier, posing to the left, took over the presidency of the RP from Herriot, took the RP out of the government and played the role of "opposition". In this situation the alliance with the SFIO was reformed for the 1932 elections. But in order to avoid being discredited, the SFIO, which fully supported the RP in parliament, refused to enter the government.

The Radical government was unable to deal with the situation. One government after another collapsed only to be replaced with another RP government. Between June of 1932 and February of 1934 there were six new Radical governments.

The working class movement developed and began to put strong pressure on the capitalists and the government. A large number of militant strikes broke out in 1933. These included strikes of the Dunkirk dockworkers, the Citroen workers, and the water transport workers who closed down the whole system, and a general strike of the workers in Strasbourg and of the state employees who were fighting government attempts to cut their wages. In January of 1934 alone we find 15,000 people demonstrating in Calais in support of the demands of the unemployed; 25,000 Paris chauffeurs (drivers) striking under CGTU leadership; and 50,000 workers demonstrating in Paris and a number of towns against attempts to cut the state employees wages. As well, an antiwar movement began to develop.

Besides the workers, other sections of the population began to go into motion. Peasant mass actions began against the fall in prices. And a broad anti-taxation movement developed among the urban petty bourgeoisie.

Reactionary leagues also proliferated and were

unleashed against the growing workers' movement. The leagues tried to take advantage of the mass disaffection with the "left" Radical government to gain influence among the masses. The largest of the reactionary organizations was the Action Francaise. This was a royalist group which worked against the parliamentary system and apparently for the restoration of the monarchy. It was formed at the time of the Dreyfus affair in the 1890s by uniting all of the various reactionary groups. From 1929 onwards it grew and began to play a major role.

As well, several fascist leagues sprang up. Among these were: La Croix de Feu (Cross of Fire), a semi-military group which claimed to be an organization of ex-service men; Jeunesse Patriote (Patriotic Youth), formed in 1924 explicitly to "combat the revolutionary danger", which formed shock troops for street fighting; and Francistes, an openly anti-semitic organization that flaunted its contacts with Hitler and Mussolini and was composed largely of gangsters and lumpens.

III. Prelude to the February Days, 1934

In December 1933 the Stavisky affair was publicly exposed. Stavisky was a high class gangster who embezzled, with the assistance of the police, judicial organs and hundreds of politicians (including a crowd of Radical ministers), 500 million francs from small depositors in social insurance banks. Although such exposures had taken place before, this one unleashed a great outrage.

The workers became even more agitated against the Radical government. The PCF stepped up its agitation against the Radicals and the SFIO support for the Radicals.

At the same time, the Action Francaise seized on the situation to call for the overthrow of the parliamentary republic. It was joined by some of the fascist leagues and, with the support of the police, organized daily demonstrations in Paris under the slogan of "Down with the Thieves". This reactionary movement was directed against the parliamentary regime and especially against the "left" bloc that was in power.

At the end of January the Radical premier Chauvemps, who was implicated in the Stavisky affair and in Stavisky's death on January 9th, resigned. He was replaced by Daladier, another Radical leader. This was the 6th Radical government since June of 1932.

To give the impression that he was fighting against the reactionary organizations, and to shore up support from the SFIO, Daladier dismissed the Paris Perfect of Police, Chiappe. Chiappe was a protector of Stavisky; he was a patron of the reactionary organizations; and he was notorious for his repression against the communist and socialist workers. To appease the reactionaries, Daladier merely removed Chiappe and promoted him to Governor of Morocco. In reply, however, Chiappe refused Daladier's offer and threatened "to appear in the

streets of Paris."

On February 6th, the royalists and fascists organized a large demonstration in Paris under the slogan of "Long Live Chiappe, Down With Parliament!" Armed demonstrators attacked the Chamber of Deputies. This demonstration was an integral part of the plan for a coup which was openly talked about by the fascist leagues and involved Chiappe and the militarists from the General Staff.

Daladier did nothing to stop the reactionaries. Troops were massed, but they were ordered not to shoot. According to a later government inquiry, the reactionary attack on the Chamber was only stopped when rank-and-file troops violated their orders and opened fire against the reactionaries.

In parliament, Daladier got an overwhelming vote of confidence. As well, the SFIO leader, Blum, offered to join the government and defend the republic, switching the previous policy of the SFIO to stay out of the government. But Daladier refused. On February 7th, Daladier publicly refused to "secure order by means that would involve sanguinary repressions and fresh bloodshed", and he resigned.

The Union Nationale seized the initiative to form a government of "national unity". Gaston Doumergue headed the new government. It included cabinet members extending from ultra-rightists to, on the "left", the Radicals (Herriot was made Minister of State, but this was reported to be without power) and a Neo-Socialist (a split from the SFIO). The Radicals called this the government of "truce". But obviously the rightists were in control. Marshal Petain, the honorary representative of the General Staff (who would later head the Nazi puppet regime during World War II), and the reactionary Tardieu were given prominent positions. In the days that followed the government showed its colors with heavy repression against the workers' demonstrations. In a short while, the Doumergue government began passing decree laws, that is, laws put in place without parliamentary approval and which imposed austerity measures on the working masses.

IV. The February Anti-Fascist Battles

Let us return to the February 6 demonstration which took place at a time when the Radicals were still in power.

The reactionary demonstration on February 6 not only aimed to change the government, but also aimed to smash the revolutionary movement. In this it failed. Instead, a powerful anti-fascist movement emerged. Apparently, there was a big spontaneous upsurge that grew daily, as thousands upon thousands of workers and youth poured into the streets of Paris and other cities to battle the fascist leagues and to protest against the Doumergue government.

On February 6, the Parisian workers in the thousands demonstrated against the reactionary organizations and the Daladier government. The PCF called a demonstration. Although the PCF demonstrators apparently fought the leagues in some cases, they were

somewhat disorganized and confused and apparently, in other cases, got mixed in with reactionary demonstrators in a general anti-government crowd.

According to a CI journal article signed by Bere:

"However, in the period immediately preceding the fascist attack of February 6, the French Communist Party to a certain extent underestimated the sporadic intensification of the political situation, the upsurge of the mass movement on the one hand and the growth of the fascist forces, on the other. Because of this underestimation, the Party press revealed a mistaken tendency to confine the struggle against fascism into a mere ideological struggle, obviously underestimating the importance of the anti-fascist demonstrations in the streets. On February 6, the day of the fascist attack, it was the Communist Party alone that called upon the workers to demonstrate against the fascists. But the effects of its underestimation of the acuteness of the political situation were felt also in the insufficient preparation and concentration of the demonstrations it organized. The result was that instead of acting in serried anti-fascist ranks, the proletarian counter-demonstrators in many cases got mixed up with the fascist crowd. It was also this underestimation of the fascist forces that prevented the Party from changing front with the necessary quickness, at the moment when the forces of fascism grew bold, took the offensive and gained the upper hand over the cowardly Daladier government. Instead of turning its front against the attacking fascists and simultaneously ruthlessly exposing the assistance rendered in the "victory" of the fascists by the "left" government, the French Communist Party continued for some time to concentrate its attention on the struggle against the measures and Ministers of the capitulating government and failed to stress sufficiently its helplessness and capitulationist tendency before the fascist attack.

"Nevertheless, after February 6, the French Communist Party succeeded in nearly overcoming all these shortcomings in the course of the struggle".

On February 7 and 8, militant anti-fascist demonstrations took place in Paris, Lyons, Guller, Dijon, Monlusson, etc. Nearly everywhere street fighting took place against the reactionaries and against the police. The PCF was at the head of the demonstrations in Paris and in the majority of other cities.

The SFIO, having lost its alliance with the Radicals and facing the workers' upsurge against the fascist leagues and the government, went into the "opposition". The "left" wing leaders, down to the more centrist Blum, began to posture more to the left. They began to praise the Soviet Union; some even talked of the dictatorship of the proletariat

in France; and they began heavy unity mongering. The SFIO proposed a "truce", or "non-aggression pact", with the PCF.

The Actions of February 9

Both the PCF and the SFIO called for demonstrations for February 9. The PCF also called for a general strike for that day. A meeting was called of the PCF, SFIO, and the CGT to work out joint action. The CGT leaders refused the February 9 actions and instead called for a 24 hour general strike for February 12. No agreement could be reached. The PCF continued its work for demonstrations on February 9 and also called for participation in the February 12 general strike. The SFIO cancelled its call for February 9 demonstrations and joined the CGT call for February 12.

In working for the February 9 actions, the PCF countered the maneuvers of the SFIO and CGT leaderships, which were done under the banner of "unity", with a call to all PCF organizations and the CGTU to "Immediately, without delay, to establish contact with the lower organizations of the General Confederation of Labor and of the Socialist Party (SFIO) with a view to immediately organizing demonstrations, strikes and all activities necessary for the defense of the proletariat."

As well, the regional organizations of the PCF were called on

"To make an official proposal to every socialist section to organize a joint demonstration on Wednesday and to organize a strike."

Despite the SFIO and CGT sabotage (among other things, they called on their members to spend the day at the socialist premises), the February 9 actions were a success. Tens of thousands demonstrated in Paris. Doumergue banned the action, and again there were sharp street clashes with the fascists and the police. Many thousands of rank-and-file socialist workers joined the demonstration. 2,000 socialist workers joined ranks in whole columns and many youth from the Jeunesse Socialiste (the SFIO youth organization) joined the street fighting.

The General Strike on February 12

The SFIO and CGT leaders also tried to sabotage the February 12 actions. Blum and CGT leaders, including Jouhaux, visited Doumergue in order to come to an agreement to adapt their actions to the general course of the government of "national unity". Jouhaux, speaking of the results of these negotiations, said:

"We do not want to add any more disorders to those, the authors of which have exposed themselves; what we want is not street demonstrations but firm and cool determination of the toilers to bar the way of the rebels."

(Populaire, February 10, 1934)

Among other things, the CGT leaders reduced the 24 hour general strike on the railways to a one minute suspension of traffic. As well, the SFIO invited Radical Party representatives to participate (which some did, mainly outside of Paris). In general, the SFIO couldn't call off the action, but they tried to restrict it, to tone it down, and to aim it at "defense of the republic" through "peaceful" means.

Nevertheless, the PCF played a big role in turning the day into one of militant mass demonstrations against the government of "national unity" and the reactionary leagues. Four million workers participated in the 24 hour general strike, and one and a half million joined the demonstrations. The PCF slogans were "Put Chiappe in prison"; "Disarm and dissolve the fascist organizations"; "Down with the government of national unity"; "Long live the Soviets"; and "Soviets in France". The slogans were widely taken up. Even demonstrations organized by the SFIO took up the PCF slogans and the call for "Soviets in France" was particularly popular.

In organizing for the February 12 actions, the PCF not only called on the masses of workers, but also formed joint committees with some organizations of the SFIO. One example is an appeal for a united front for the general strike issued jointly by Regional Committee of the Communist Party and the Socialist section of the 20th district of Paris. It read in part:

"We declare that we do not call upon the workers to make a 'peaceful protest' in defense of the bourgeois republic. We decided to fight against this policy of the lesser evil, which in Germany resulted in the advent of fascism."

Following February 12, the PCF continued to organize mass actions. On February 17, for example, 200,000 demonstrated in Paris entirely under PCF's leadership and slogans. This was a funeral demonstration for those killed in previous clashes.

Certain general features of the February days were pointed out in the CI journal article by Bere.

There were a number of new developments. State employees en masse participated in the general strike for the first time. All post and telegraph employees, without exception, participated. Small shopkeepers and artisans joined in. A number of remote towns witnessed revolutionary demonstrations for the first time. In a number of localities Arab workers demonstrated side by side with French workers.

The mass actions had an exceptionally turbulent and militant character. Barricades were set up and street fighting took place in Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Nice, and other places. In Mulhausen the prison was stormed. In Algiers the town hall was stormed.

The united front tactics of the PCF were very successful. The CGT and the SFIO were pressured by the masses into joint participation with the PCF and

the CGTU. Still they tried to keep their columns separate. But, except in a few cases, this was in vain.

There was a rapid growth of the PCF's political influence over the masses. The PCF's newspaper, L'Humanite, increased its distribution by three-quarters, reaching 600,000 daily in the period of February 6 to 12. The Jeunesse Communistes (Communist Youth) grew by 3,000 members in the month or two following February 6. (From 1932, the SFIO's Jeunesse Socialiste dropped in membership from 11,800 to 8,000.)

The crisis of social-democracy became severe. They were unable to stop the mass movement against the fascists and the government. Despite the SFIO's "left" phrases and maneuvering, the workers began to lose trust in the social-democrats' willingness or ability to fight the fascist forces. The workers in the reformist and socialist organizations began protesting the sabotage of revolutionary activities; and there are cases of whole unions, like the railway workers, refusing to pay dues.

V. February 1934 to the United Front Against Fascism Agreement Between the PCF and SFIO in July 1934

From February through June the mass upsurge against the reactionary leagues and against the Doumergue government continued. Between mid-February, through June there were 22 street demonstrations and 930 public meetings in Paris alone.

Among the prominent actions the following could be mentioned: March 4 — 200,000 workers demonstrate in Paris at the funeral of a Paris worker killed by the police in an earlier action against fascist the Jeunesse Patriotes; April 20 — tens of thousands of state employees and others demonstrate at the city hall against the policies of the Doumergue government, despite a government ban of the action; widespread demonstrations took place on May Day, the anniversary of the Paris Commune of 1871 was another day of broad demonstrations; June 10 — mass actions were called on the anniversary of the assassination by the fascists of the Italian socialist, Matteotti.

In all of the above actions, both the PCF and SFIO, along with the unions and other left organizations, took part. The rank-and-file workers from the different organizations appear to have been consistently coming out for joint actions and pressure mounted for a united front. As well "unity pacts" between local sections of the PCF and the SFIO proliferated.

One manifestation of the mood can be found in a statement of La Bataille Socialiste, the paper of the leaders of the "left"-wing of the SFIO, which was strongest in Paris. The March 15 issue of the paper was devoted entirely to the question of unity. In one article the "left" social-democratic leader Zyromski wrote that "de facto" unity at the base would soon be achieved on a local basis and would

constitute the first step toward organic fusion of the two parties.

In May, the SFIO held its congress in Toulouse. It reflected the growing pressure from the base pushing the SFIO to the left and for unity with the PCF. A resolution was passed calling on the Second International to invite the Third International for unity talks. But about a third of the delegates voted in favor of a stronger resolution that the SFIO immediately send a delegation to Moscow to seek an agreement between the SFIO and PCF at the Comintern level. Another resolution was passed in favor of the SFIO cooperating with the PCF peace organization (this had been rejected previously). Again nearly a third of the delegates wanted a stronger stand to join the PCF-backed peace organization. Another resolution was passed to support, in elections, only those candidates who signed a formal declaration against the Union Nationale. But again, a third of the delegates supported a stronger resolution rejecting support for any candidate who belonged to a political group that had supported or endorsed the Doumergue government. In other words, there was growing opposition to the Radicals and neo-socialists, who were in the Doumergue government, and increasing pressure for an agreement with the PCF.

Following the conference, Thorez analyzed that the SFIO was disintegrating. The basic division was between the mass of members who favored unity and the leadership who opposed unity. Among the leadership there was division over how to maneuver to extricate themselves from this difficult situation. The PCF task, according to Thorez, was to facilitate the passage of the social-democratic workers over to communism and to prevent their going over to fascism.

On May 30, a L'Humanite article declared that the PCF was in favor of negotiations with the SFIO leaders. The article kept up the PCF's harsh words for the SFIO leaders. In June negotiations of some sort apparently took place. But on June 20, the SFIO leadership decided to break off any further negotiations apparently on the grounds that the PCF was still calling for severing the workers from the SFIO leadership.

From June 23 to 26 the Ivry conference of the PCF took place. This conference marked the beginning of the turn to the right on the part of the PCF leadership. This conference is discussed in more detail in the speech on the PCF [which is also in this issue of the Workers' Advocate Supplement]. Here we will mention only that the defense of the Republic (as the democratic struggle) and petty-bourgeois nationalism began to be promoted. As well, the conference declared for reaching an agreement with the SFIO leaders "at all costs".

In July negotiations between the PCF and the SFIO began. On July 2, the PCF held a public meeting, invited the SFIO leaders, declared that the PCF would end harsh words against the SFIO, and both PCF and SFIO speakers declared from the platform their

desire for unity.

On July 15, a meeting ironed out the remaining general differences on the pact. The PCF gave up its demand that joint action should extend to strike action. The SFIO demanded the independence of the trade unions from political parties and that therefore the agreement could not include strike action. The PCF agreed. The PCF also dropped its demand for the continuation of public controversies over the aims and doctrines of the two parties. The PCF agreed to negotiate the details of the program for unity based on the SFIO outline, which is described as follows by one author:

"1) Mutual good faith and the cessation of all insults or recriminations. 2) The 'necessity of defending democratic liberties' and an appeal to all persons willing to join in this defense. 3) The rejection of a 'systematic recourse to violence' and the diminution of the excessive number of manifestations that only lead workers 'through disillusionment to indifference.' 4) The supervision of all joint activities by a coordination committee consisting of representative from both parties." (Quoted from French Socialism in Crisis by John T. Marcus, pp. 75-76)

On July 27, a pact for united action is concluded. It calls for a joint nationwide campaign that aims at:

"1. The mobilization of workers against fascism and the dissolution and disarmament of fascist leagues.

"2. The defense of democratic liberties and -- to defeat the present reactionary coalition in parliament -- the dissolution of the chamber with new elections on the basis of proportional representation.

"3. Action against the government's rule by decree.

"4. A cooperative battle against Nazi terror in Germany for the liberation of political prisoners, especially the Communist Thaelmann and the Socialist Seity." (Page 78 of French Socialism in Crisis. This is also quoted in a September 1934 article in the CI journal, but the above seems to be a better translation.)

According to Marcus' account, the program was to be achieved by means of the following policies:

"1. Joint meetings, manifestations and street demonstrations but only at the best 'psychological moments'; the protection of these meetings through 'auto-defense' (self-defense) and mutual assistance, particularly during riots by fascist forces. In opposing the government, an appeal to all democrats would be made, regardless of party or political opinions.

"2. Each side would refrain, for the duration of the pact, from insults or attacks on any militants participating in joint ac-

tion; outside their common meetings, each party would retain its entire freedom of propaganda and recruitment, but their common meetings would be 'exclusively devoted to the common goal and not transformed into controversial debates on doctrines.'

"3. Each party would agree to discipline its own members who failed to abide by the pact." (French Socialism in Crisis, pp. 78-79)

An unsigned article in the September 1934 issue of the CI journal, entitled "The Struggle for the United Front in France", hails and tries to justify the pact. Admitting that the pact was not all that was wanted and, in particular, that it would have been good to have an agreement for united action on a wider scale and with more effective methods of struggle, the article says:

"But our French comrades have not yet been able to bring this about. The socialist leaders had already broken off negotiations on one occasion, and it was only due to the pressure which the masses exerted on the Socialist Party, only due to the noticeable growth of the influence of the Communist Party, to the efforts and concessions made by our French comrades, concessions in the interests of the united front, that nonetheless an agreement has been reached. It is plain that the united front organized with the participation of the leaders of the Socialist Party made concessions essential on the part of the Communists." And it adds later: "But in spite of the fact that the agreement cost the French Communists very dear, it is nevertheless a positive factor, not only for the French proletariat, but also for the entire international working class movement."

It is noteworthy here to mention that this article claims that the SFIO made a concession to the PCF "to adopt certain methods of the class struggle". Apparently this means that they agreed to joint demonstrations. The article goes on to admit that the PCF made the concession that in joint actions it would "limit itself merely to methods of struggle which are acceptable to the latter (SFIO)." This apparently meant that, besides dropping strikes, the demonstrations were to be kept "peaceful" and the number of them to be limited. In other words, although it is claimed that the aim was to build up the anti-fascist movement, the agreement is actually for the most wishy-washy actions, limited in number, and most of all directed toward joint electoral work against the Doumergue government.

VI. Toward Alliance with the Radical Party — Mid-1934 to the Election of the People's Front Government in May 1936

In September, 1934, the Doumergue government proposed a constitutional reform that would allow the government to dismiss parliament. Radical Party

leaders, while continuing to sit in the government and support it, came out against the constitutional reform to give some appearance of "opposition".

In the same month Thorez stepped up propaganda for alliance with the French "middle classes". In a September 9th *L'Humanite* article he says that most of the demands of the "French middle classes" are "the specific demands of communism".

In October, Thorez proposed that the Radicals cosign joint PCF-SFIO proposals for democratic reform of the government to be debated in the Chamber. As well, Thorez attended the Nantes congress of the Radicals, which began October 24, and delivered a speech proposing a "People's Front for Liberty, Work and Peace". For the most part the Radicals appeared to remain uninterested. At Nantes they continued the game of supporting Doumergue, while opposing constitutional reform.

In the October canton elections, the PCF picked up 16 seats, the SFIO picked up 2 and the Radicals formally lost 17. Radical leader Herriot admitted that they really lost 50, but figure juggling reduced their loss to only 17.

In November, the plenum of the Central Committee of the PCF endorsed the tactics of alliance with the Radicals. As well, the PCF proposed negotiations for merger with the SFIO into a single party. [For more on this, see the speech on the PCF elsewhere in this issue of the Supplement.]

On November 8, the Doumergue government collapsed, partly due to the pressure from the Radicals. It was replaced by what was considered a slightly more moderate government headed by Flandin. The Radicals supported this government. The SFIO apparently gave it some kind of conditional support.

In December, Radical publications began to discuss the possibility of alliance with the PCF, but rejected that possibility largely on the grounds that the PCF was against "national defense", which was a major plank of the Radicals.

On February 10, 100,000 people demonstrated in Paris to commemorate the dead of the February days of 1934.

In May, municipal and some national elections took place. The Radicals lost a few positions. The SFIO also lost six. The PCF won 43 elections and became the largest party in Paris and the department (that is, province or region) of the Seine. In May, the PCF and the SFIO set up a joint committee to discuss merger into a single party.

At the beginning of June, the Flandin government collapsed. On the eve of its collapse, May 30, Thorez announced in the Chamber:

"We are ready to bring you our support, President Herriot, if you or any other leader of your Party wish to take over the direction of a Radical government...that would really apply the policies of the Radical Party."

The Radicals entered into negotiations with the SFIO and the PCF to set up a new government. According to one account Thorez agreed to enter a government, even if it included ministers even more "moderate"

than the Radicals, if only the government would "struggle to protect democratic liberties" and deal with the crisis. The SFIO leaders were less interested in an agreement. The Radicals broke off the negotiations and instead agreed to the Union Nationale government of Laval.

Laval took power on June 7. He passed additional decree laws for austerity measures and other reactionary measures. On June 21 the committee for the People's Front was formed. On July 3 the Radical Party agreed to participate in the committee.

In July, the CGTU and the CGT agreed to merger on the conditions that the PCF dissolved its fractions and agreed to trade union neutrality. (In September each union center held conventions and endorsed the merger. In May 1936, they held a unity congress.)

On July 14, Bastille Day, a demonstration reported to be 500,000 strong was held in Paris against the 200 families (the richest of the rich) and against the danger of war. Both the Marseillaise and the Internationale were sung. It was considered a big success for the People's Front.

The 7th Congress of the CI was held in July.

In October, the first meeting on merger was held by the SFIO and the PCF. Talks continued in November. [The text of the SFIO proposal for merger, submitted November 21, 1938, and of the PCF reply proposal, submitted on December 29, 1938, are part of the reference materials that will be printed in a future issue of the Supplement.]

On January 11, 1936, the program of the People's Front was published. [This program is also part of the reference materials that will be printed in a future issue.] The PCF, SFIO, and most of the RP adopt this as their election program.

On January 18, the executive committee of the Radicals met and decided that Laval's methods were "contrary to doctrines" of the RP. Herriot left the government. Daladier, who had been appearing publicly with the PCF and SFIO, for example at the July 14 demonstration, was elected chairman of the RP. A few days later, all the Radical ministers resigned and the Laval government fell. It was succeeded by a government headed by Sarraut. (Incidentally, this was the government that ratified the Franco-Soviet Pact.)

In April, the CGT and CGTU formally amalgamated into the CGT. The first unity congress of the CGT was held in May. At the time of amalgamation the CGT had about 600,000 members and the CGTU had about 300,000. By the end of 1936, with the great upsurge in the workers' movement, the united CGT had grown to 5 million members.

At the end of April and the beginning of May the national elections were held. The People's Front won the elections, taking 378 of the 618 seats. Blum-headed the new government which assumed office on June 4th.

**VII. The People's Front Government At Its Height:
June 1936 - June 1937**

I. The Strike Movement

May 30, the largest strike movement in French history began. At its peak, over one million workers were on strike simultaneously. The predominant form of struggle was occupation of the factories, including in numerous instances the imprisonment of management for the duration of the strike. This was an extremely powerful and concentrated struggle of the French working class. Alexander Werth, a bourgeois journalist who wrote favorable books on the People's Front, claims that the struggle was largely spontaneous in its origin and in its extension. However, the PCF claimed credit for starting the strikes. Judging from the fact that a large number of the strikers were non-unionized, it would appear that the strike grew through a spontaneous upsurge of the workers.

The election of the People's Front no doubt had its impact. The rank-and-file workers expected a great deal from the People's Front and were excited by the strength that they had shown in the elections.

On June 4, Blum assumed office. Within days the government negotiated the Matignon agreement between the national manufacturers' association and the CGT. The agreement entailed: a) a guaranteed right to collective bargaining; b) recognition of the CGT as the bargaining agent for striking workers; c) 40 hour work week with no cut in pay; and d) two week paid vacation annually.

These measures were ratified into law by parliament. But the agreement had also called for wage increases to be negotiated; these were delayed and in many cases eventually denied by the employers.

It is notable that the strike movement continued after the conclusion of the Matignon agreement, which was signed June 7. On June 8, nearly half a million coal miners came out on strike in the north of France. On the 9th, the insurance employees resorted to the stay-in strike, while 100,000 textile workers came out for a 10% wage increase (which they presently got.) On the 10th still more of the Paris dress-making establishments were struck, and on the 11th the Paris hotels and restaurants were struck. The movement continued at least to the end of the month before it subsided.

Indeed, stopping the movement after the agreement was signed required the combined efforts of Blum's government, which stationed troops before the factories, the trade union leaders, and the leaders of the SFIO and the PCF. On June 8 the front page of L'Humanite called on all strikers to resume work. A bourgeois historian by the name of David Brower described the PCF activities to bring an end to the strike:

"The Party leadership decided finally to take special measures to meet the critical situation. They were losing control of their

followers and could see that the country was in serious danger of grave internal disorder. They began by obtaining from the secretaries of the Party cells in the Paris region, brought together in a meeting on June 9, an expression of 'confidence' in their policies. The next day, L'Humanite published an appeal to the workers to observe 'vigilant rigor' against any suspicious elements seeking to upset the 'tranquil discipline' in the factories. Finally a special meeting of the Party members from the Paris region was held on June 11 in order to give Maurice Thorez the opportunity to outline the new tactics. The General Sect. rejected completely any revolutionary hopes which the great strike movement might have raised within the Party. 'To seize power now' he declared, 'is out of the question.' He pointed out that the middle classes and the peasantry were not on the side of the workers. Showing the Comintern's concern for French unity, he warned that nothing must be done to 'dislocate the cohesion of the masses.' The strike movement had to be limited to the 'satisfaction of the demands of an economic character.' Therefore, the workers 'must know how to end (a strike) as soon as satisfaction has been obtained.' Even 'compromise was necessary' if all the demands have not been accepted yet but if victory has been obtained on the most essential and important demands.' He called on the metallurgical workers of Paris to end their strike and disavowed Communists who intervened in strikes. The Communist Party was thereafter unequivocally committed to the peaceful settlement of the conflict. Its motto, proclaimed in bold headlines on L'Humanite front page on June 14 was: 'The Communist Party is Order.'"

"From that moment on, the Communist leaders worked to end the strikes. On June 13, the CC, presided over by the Gen. Sect. of the Metallurgical Federation, Ambroise Croizat, approved Thorez' call for an end to the strikes in order to avoid campaigns of fright and panic. The day before, the Paris Association of Metallurgical Unions had accepted a compromise settlement. This example was followed by several other major unions in the Paris region. Within a few days, the majority of strikes in the capital had been settled. Calm had been restored at last, thanks in large part to the authority of the CP among the Parisian workers." (Brower, D. The New Jacobins.)

We cannot testify to the absolute reliability of Brower's account. But his quotes from Thorez are accurate and the main lines of his account follow what we already know directly from Thorez and other PCF sources. Brower fills in some interesting details, in particular the suggestion of resistance to

the PCF leader's "tactic" among the rank-and-file cadre for several days. Brower's account confirms that the PCF was indeed quite active in suppressing the strike movement and that Thorez' later boast, that the PCF called for the full force of the law to be applied against the extremists who wanted to continue the strikes, was accurate.

It is clear also that the PCF leaders' actions to suppress the strike movement was motivated by their desire to maintain the People's Front, and particularly, the alliance with the Radicals. The PCF was now siding with the People's Front government **against the mass movement.**

2. Were the Fascist Bands Dissolved?

The organized strength of the fascist groups in France declined in 1936 as compared to 1934-35. The role of the PF government in this is not entirely clear.

In December, 1935, under the rightist government of Laval, fascist militias had already been "outlawed" -- i.e. prohibited in words. During the spring of 1936 Blum was assaulted by a fascist group, and the caretaker cabinet installed after the fall of Laval and before the elections of the PF government took some measures against fascist gangs. When the PF government assumed office, in June of 1936, the government ordered the dissolution of the Croix de Feu, etc.

One source indicates that the fascists readily evaded the order to dissolve merely by changing their names, because the government never implemented the law. It is for certain that the Croix de Feu -- renamed the French Social Party -- continued to organize large meetings and to engage in violent clashes with the police and the PCF from time to time. Thus it would appear that the fascist movement had ebbed due to the struggle of the French masses; neither the PF government, nor any other government in this period, took any serious measures to really suppress the fascist organizations, but the organized strength of the fascists was declining in 1936 which is also when various token measures were taken against the fascist bands, including the ineffective order to dissolve from Blum. What is for sure is that the PF government cannot be credited with dissolving the fascist gangs.

3. The Spanish Civil War and "Non-Intervention"

The Spanish Civil War broke out one month following the elections in France. Within a week, Blum suspended all sales of armaments to the Republic, even sales in fulfillment of contracts concluded long before the hostilities began.

Soon, Blum launched his campaign for "non-intervention" in Spain. It is important to emphasize that Blum was an initiator, leader and organizer of this campaign, which was a classic instance of social-democratic "opposition" -- i.e., collaboration -- with fascism. Blum's scheme called for all gov-

ernments to be "neutral" in the Spanish conflict and for an international embargo on all armaments shipments to Spain. Blum organized all those governments which might have been subject to pressure to send arms to the Republic to participate in the non-intervention pact. Hence Blum supplied them with the argument they needed as to why they did not send arms -- as supposedly a means to force Germany and Italy to stop supporting Franco. At any rate, that was the absurd premise of Blum's scheme. In September he organized an international conference which the Soviet Union attended and which created a committee to organize the embargo of arms. (The Soviet Union dropped out after several months and then denounced non-intervention as a fraud.)

The PCF organized independent support for the Spanish Republic from the very beginning. And, until December 1936, it opposed and organized opposition to Blum's "non-interventionism". The PCF consistently organized material aid -- including volunteers -- for Spain. In the initial period, at any rate, it organized a mass solidarity movement.

In this work, a great deal of the PCF organizing was directed toward pressuring the Blum government to change its stand on Spain. In September the PCF began to organize "political strikes" -- hour-long protest strikes, actually -- in favor of government aid to the Spanish Republicans. Mass meetings and demonstrations were organized for the same purpose.

While it organized this mass opposition to the Blum government on the question of Spain, the PCF continued to support the People's Front government overall throughout this period. Indeed, it was right in September -- when the campaign for aid to Spain had started in full swing -- that PCF voted in favor of devaluation of the franc in order not to split the People's Front. (See below on devaluation of franc.) Even more, when the SFIO and RP began to threaten that continued, active opposition to non-intervention by the PCF would lead to a split, the PCF called off the protest strikes. Other means for mass pressure on the government however were continued for a brief period. In December -- as rightist pressure on the Blum government increased -- the PCF called off these mass pressure tactics as well and stopped all criticism of Blum's non-intervention policy so as not to embarrass the government.

The PCF did continue to support the Spanish Republicans after the campaign against non-intervention ended in December 1936. But it appears that its work in support of the Republic never again reached the intensity it assumed in this initial period.

4. French Colonialism

Under Blum, the People's Front created a Commission of Inquiry into the Colonial Question. This was the only thing that the social-democratic SFIO and the raving chauvinists of the RP would agree to. We have no evidence of what it inquired into or what, if anything, it found out through its inquiry.

Nor is there any indication that the PCF carried out independent work of its own in this period on the colonial question.

After Blum resigned, there were several cabinets of Radicals and Socialists which the PCF supported and continued to call People's Front governments. One of these violently suppressed numerous struggles of the African people, and particularly an uprising in Morocco in November 1937. We have not found any evidence that the PCF supported this suppression, but they continued to support the government which carried it out. It is certain, however, that the PCF supported the suppression of the organization "North African Star" in the same year. Previously, the Communist Party of Algeria had supported this organization for its opposition to French colonialism. When it was suppressed, the PCF claimed that it was playing into the hands of the fascists by its anti-French agitation.

Without being able to speak about this organization and its activities, we can still see that here is a case of the PCF applying its new line that struggle against French colonialism weakens the fight against fascism.

5. Economic Program of the PF Government

The measures which the People's Front government took soon after coming into office (sometimes referred to as the "French New Deal") included:

- a. The Matignon agreement
- b. A 20 billion franc public works program to provide jobs. (The bill for it passed, but no action was ever taken to implement it after it was passed; and the "Pause" buried it for good.)
- c. Establishment of a Wheat Office to forestall bankruptcy of small and middle peasants by insuring higher prices for farm produce. We have no statistics on how many bankruptcies it allegedly prevented, but the line was to save farmers at the expense of the workers, not the bankers.
- d. "Nationalization" of the armaments industry.
- e. Reform of the Bank of France by changing the method for selecting its Board of Governors — i.e., the French government had a hand in choosing them now and votes were spread to a wider section of the bourgeoisie.

The "nationalization" of the armaments industry -- long a demand of the SFIO -- is the only measure about which we do not know enough to comment on its significance. The other measures -- excluding the Matignon agreement, on which see above -- are typical liberal bourgeois reforms: either to make the workers pay under the guise of giving relief to the people (Wheat Office) or to make the institutions of the financial elite more "democratic", while maintaining them and continuing their policy of squeezing the working masses (reform of the Bank of France).

In September 1936 the People's Front government devalued the franc.

Devaluation had been promoted since 1934 by a

prominent rightist politician, Reynaud, as a means to cheapen the cost of production (cut wages) and solve the export deficit problem. Other rightist politicians supported "defense of the franc" and an open attack on the workers' wages. In fact, the latter line was the one pursued by the French bourgeoisie until the strike movement of summer 1936 made it impossible. Then, more and more capitalists spoke out in favor of devaluation to recoup losses due to wage increases.

When Blum first assumed office, he had opposed devaluation, but he switched by September in the face of extensive pressure from the right. The PCF continued to denounce devaluation as a measure for robbing the workers' wages at the same time that they **voted for it** in the Chamber in order to maintain the unity of the People's Front.

The "Pause" was officially declared by Blum in February 1937, when he announced that the People's Front government would no longer even attempt to pursue the economic reforms called for in its program and that, rather, austerity measures were required to solve the growing fiscal crisis of state finances. In June 1937, when Blum failed to win a vote granting him authority to stop the flow of capital from the country, the Blum government collapsed.

On the other side, since the devaluation of the franc in September, the strike movement was on the upswing. When the "Pause" was announced, the strikes increased and the workers also organized demonstrations against the Blum government. The police shot down five workers outside Paris who were demonstrating against the "Pause". How this motion was organized and what role the PCF played in it is not known.

VIII. The People's Front Drags On and Collapses — June 1937 to the Fall of 1938

On June 21, 1937 the Blum government resigned. It was succeeded on the following day by a new "people's front government" headed by the Radical Chautemps. The SFIO again held seats in the government. The PCF offered to enter this government. But the RP and SFIO rejected the offer. The PCF, nevertheless, continued to support the government as a government of the People's Front.

On March 13, 1938 Blum returned to head another "People's Front government". Radicals and Socialists formed the cabinet, but the PCF was kept out. Once again the PCF continued to support the government. Blum's cabinet only lasted a month, resigning on April 8 when its financial reform bill was once more rejected by the parliament.

On April 10, Daladier formed another government. Neither the SFIO nor the PCF were given positions in the cabinet, but both continued to support the government.

In September, Daladier accompanied Britain's Chamberlain to meet Hitler and Mussolini in Munich, where they concluded the notorious Munich pact.

In October, the Daladier government abolished the 40-hour week. In November, the Radicals formally broke their alliance with the SFIO and the PCF. This marked the formal end of the People's Front.

After the collapse of the last People's Front government, the government in France fell into the hands of a liberal-center coalition. With the outbreak of World War II, this regime banned the communist press and arrested activists, dismissed municipal councils with a communist majority, and displayed the iron fist against the working masses, while leaving the country open to the German blitzkrieg. And it may be noted that France did not fall in a few days to the Nazi blitzkrieg because of overwhelming German military superiority -- the French armed forces were large and equipped with modern weapons -- but because the French general staff was reactionary and lacked the desire to re-

sist.

So much for the myth of how the Popular Front in France stemmed the fascist tide in France of the 1930's.

As a final note, we may add that during the war years, the social-democratic and liberal leaders did not prove to be militant anti-fascist fighters any more than in the Popular Front years. Indeed, a number of prominent liberals and social-democrats entered the service of the fascist pro-Nazi puppet government that was set up in part of France (the other part of the country was under direct German administration). The social-democratic party went into pieces under the weight of its capitulation to fascism, and it was only gradually re-organized by social-democrats who wished to resist fascism, albeit in a reformist fashion. <>

This special issue of **The Workers' Advocate** is devoted to the **Second Congress of the MLP, USA**. It contains the **Communique on the Second Congress** and the bulk of the resolutions of the Congress.

The documents published in this special issue provide valuable guidance to activists and class conscious workers on how to develop the revolutionary alternative. These resolutions analyze the current political situation and set forth the tasks of revolutionary work in the mass movements. They show the vital role of proletarian organization and party building and describe the importance of the fight against the renegade liquidationist mood which has gripped much of the U.S. left. The resolutions discuss the struggle against social-democracy and revisionism. And they analyze the international situation in depth and set forth the work which is essential for strengthening the international Marxist-Leninist movement.

95 pages

ISBN 0-86714-026-7

\$1.00

Order from: Marxist-Leninist Publications
P.O. Box 11972 Ontario St. Stn. Chicago, IL 60611

Documents of the Second Congress of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA



To meet the challenge of the capitalist
offensive, the times demand one thing:
Steadfast revolutionary work

The Workers' Advocate
OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY, USA
Volume 14, Number 1 January 1, 1984

91.00

Our differences with the Party of Labor of Albania

A theoretical issue of **The Workers' Advocate** devoted to examining the stand and views of the Party of Labor of Albania towards controversial questions in the international Marxist-Leninist movement.

Vol. 14, No. 3

March 20, 1984

\$1.00

Order from: Marxist-Leninist Publications
P.O. Box 11972, Ontario St. Stn., Chicago, IL 60611

In Defense of Marxism-Leninism

On Problems in the Orientation of the
International Communist Movement
in the Period from the End of
World War II to the Death of Stalin

A theoretical issue of **The Workers' Advocate**
issued on May 1, 1984 128 pages \$1.50

Order from: M-L Publications
P.O. Box 11972, Ontario St. Stn., Chicago, IL 60611

ON THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

Based on a speech at the Second Congress of the MLP, USA in Fall 1983. Edited for publication with additional material added.

Comrades,

This speech is to present some preliminary views of the Central Committee on the serious problems with the political line which was adopted at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in July-August 1935. At this time a distinctly new and different orientation was given to the communist parties of the world from that of the first six CI Congresses. The 1934-5 period, culminating at the Seventh Congress, appears to be the turning point when a basically wrong line began to be put forward on a whole series of very fundamental issues.

Our study of the CI indicates that the line given in the first six congresses, from 1919 to 1928, was both consistent and Marxist-Leninist. This is also true of the "Sixth Congress period" from 1928 to 1934, although certain problems can be observed in the work of the CI at this time.

Of course, there were weaknesses and problems throughout the period of the CI. It could not be "perfect", even when it was basically correct. The CI wasn't composed of holy, infallible ones, but of real, living people working under the conditions of rapid changes and the severe demands of stormy revolutionary developments. "Perfection" is not demanded, required or sought. But what is required is that communists hold fast to Leninism and fight for the revolutionary stand of the proletariat. It is impermissible to violate principles, but this is what was done at the Seventh Congress.

This report is mainly just an examination of a number of basic problems in the Seventh Congress Report of Dimitrov and other Seventh Congress materials. It is intended for preliminary discussion here at the Second Congress, and it is not recommended that any decisions on this matter be taken here at the Congress. This preliminary discussion should serve to facilitate further study and consideration by the whole Party and the CC after the Second Congress. Of course, this implies coming to some definite conclusions at a later date. It is important to tread cautiously in such important matters. When we take a stand, we are firm about it. We have to fight like hellcats to defend our line and it is best to unfold the inevitable struggle in such a way as we know what we are doing; draw maximum blood from our enemies; clean up the debris that history has left in our path in the quickest and most systematic fashion; and not have to back down on things due to some ill-considered position.

[Since the Second Congress and after a party-wide discussion, the comrades of our Party voted to condemn the "new tactical orientation" of the 7th Congress as a backward turn in the development of the

CI and a harmful influence on the heroic communist work of leading the anti-fascist struggle.--ed.]

This talk will have four sections:

***The historical setting of the Seventh Congress and the tasks it faced.

***The demagogical style of Dimitrov's speeches, which serve to conceal just what is being advocated.

***Five major subjects where the political line is being changed for the worst and serious errors are made.

a) on fascism;

b) on social-democracy;

c) on the united front;

d) on war and peace;

e) on the attitude to national reformism in the oppressed nations.

*** Some points in conclusion.

1. On the Historical Setting of the 7th Congress and the Tasks It Faced

The Seventh Congress was held when the situation internationally was stormy from all directions and was marked by the offensive of fascism. The Seventh Congress was faced with this new situation and had to take account of all the changes that had occurred in the world, and in the growth and development of the communist parties, since the last congress.

What were some of the main features of the world situation in which the Seventh Congress met?

a) Beginning in 1929, the capitalist world was plunged into deep, global economic crisis. Unemployment grew enormously. Living conditions worsened for the working people all over the capitalist world. Trade fell, and the economies of the oppressed nations also were sent into stagnation and paralysis. In response, the struggles in defense of the vital interests of the laboring masses mounted as the 1930's wore on.

b) The bourgeoisie was going over, more and more, to fascism to crush the revolutionary working class movement and prepare for war. This was most clearly seen in Germany, where the bourgeoisie installed Hitler in January 1933.

c) The menace of another world war began to loom closer with the advent of the frankly imperialist and openly aggressive Hitlerites to power in Germany. As well, Japan had invaded and occupied Manchuria in 1931, opening a period of deeper and deeper incursions into China. Shortly after the Seventh Congress, in October 1935, Italy would invade Ethiopia. This would be followed by German remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, the anti-Comintern Pacts of 1936 and 1937, the German-Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War, Japan's all-out invasion of China south of the Great Wall in 1937, Germany's annexation of Austria in 1938 and Czechoslovakia in 1939, Italy invading Albania in 1939, and the outbreak of World War II with the German invasion of Poland on Sept. 1, 1939. Thus

the Seventh Congress was held at a time when the events leading up to World War II were beginning to unfold.

d) In the Soviet Union, great victories of socialist construction were being won by the working class and peasantry. While the entire capitalist world was languishing in economic crisis and misery, the socialist Soviet Union alone was immune from its effects and, on the contrary, was achieving big advances in industry and agriculture. Its political and cultural achievements also were a beacon. The contrast between the two systems was sharp, and the working people of the world were being attracted like never before to the ideas of socialism. Socialism was clearly proving its superiority to capitalism.

e) There was an impulse of the masses to the left and the prospect of the further radicalization, or revolutionization, of the working class. The crisis had disproved the theories of the social-democrats about the garden path to socialism through steady and gradual improvement of the workers' lot under capitalism. The Marxist theory of capitalist crisis was again proven correct and the necessity for revolution was being dramatically illustrated. The social-democratic leaders faced the danger of exposing themselves more and more as servants of the bourgeoisie through their obstruction of the strikes and other struggles of the working class movement. Many communist parties, on the other hand, had consolidated themselves further and were fighting hard to establish themselves as the true leaders of the masses.

f) Under the pressure of these, and other developments, international social-democracy was in the throes of crisis. The installation of German fascism provided a glaring exposure of the Social-Democratic Party (SDP) of Germany, the leading party of the Second International. The stand of the SDP-G had proved to be an all-round assistance to the Hitlerites in their drive to power, principally by undermining the fighting power of the working masses, by chaining the working class to a coalition with the bourgeoisie, by identifying the working class movement in the eyes of the masses with the oppressive measures of the German bourgeois republic, by undermining the mass anti-fascist struggle and by rejecting every appeal of the Communist Party to rise in revolt against fascism. The more revolutionary-minded social-democratic workers were drawing closer to the communist parties. An impulse toward the anti-fascist united front could be seen, despite the objections and blockage by the leaders of the social-democratic parties and the reformist trade unions. This was true, for example, in Germany, in the fall of 1932, just prior to Hitler's installation as head of state, and then afterwards under fascist rule; in Austria after the crushing of the anti-fascist uprising of February 1934; and in France, Great Britain, etc. in the wake of these events.

g) The liberation movement of the oppressed and

On the Seventh Congress of the Comintern

Introduction.....	24
1. On the Historical Setting of the 7th Congress and the Tasks It Faced.....	24
2. Demagogy of the 7th Congress	27
3-7: Some of the Significant Opportunist Deviations Advanced at the 7th Congress	
3. On the Issue of Fascism Itself	28
A) On the Class Basis of Fascism	29
Germany.....	30
Severe Struggle Within the Bourgeoisie?.....	30
Not Just with the Liberals.....	31
But Certainly with the Liberals.....	31
B) Detaching the Fight Against Fascism from the Socialist Revolution.....	32
Not Constitutions, But Definite Class Forces Fight Fascism.....	33
The Experience of the Anti-Fascist Struggles of the 1920's.....	33
C) Catering to Petty-Bourgeois Prejudices....	34
4. On the Attitude towards Social-Democracy	35
A) Has Social-Democracy Become Pro-Working Class?.....	35
Is the Labor Aristocracy Going Over to Class Struggle?.....	36
The Social-Democratic Workers are Becoming Radicalized — and Hence So Are the Leaders ?.....	37
B) Covering up the Treachery of Social-Democracy.....	38
C) Denying Existence of the "Left" Phrasemongering Wing of Social-Democracy	39
D) Organizational Merger with the Social-Democratic Parties.....	40
5. Wrong Views on United Front Tactics	42
6. Wrong Views on the Question of War and Peace..	43
7. Wrong Views on the Liberation Struggle of the Oppressed Nations	45
8. And Other Issues	46
Some Points in Conclusion	46

dependent peoples was fighting tenaciously in several countries. In the first place there was China. In 1934, the revolutionary forces were in a difficult position. After defeating numerous encirclement and suppression campaigns, the Red Army broke through the ring of KMT troops (the Kuomintang was by then a reactionary bourgeois nationalist organization led by the big Chinese exploiters and in control of the central Chinese government) and began the Long March to the Northwest of China. In Oct. 1935 they reached their destination and set up a new

Soviet region. This was to be the base from which they could make a comeback through stepping into the forefront of the fight against the Japanese invaders and could hold out and strengthen their position against the Chinese reactionaries. In India, the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist movement assumed massive proportions in the early 1930's, with the working class and Communist Party playing a larger role in it.

In Latin America, mass actions against foreign imperialism swept through Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and elsewhere. Large strikes also occurred in the early 30's. The communist parties were growing in strength and playing an important role in the anti-imperialist movement.

h) Amid all of this, the key issue was that, as the workers' revolutionary movement and the national liberation movement grew and developed, as the USSR became a stronger socialist base area, the bourgeoisie was throwing up fascist reaction to crush the revolution by outright terror, violence and war.

The clearest example of this was provided by the events in Germany surrounding the Hitler Party's rise to power. The Nazis succeeded in setting up their undivided rule and in dealing the Communist Party and working class movement heavy blows. This was a big defeat for the working class. The KPD (Communist Party of Germany) was probably the strongest party of the CI, except for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It was large, with an experienced leadership and a developed system of mass organizations. It fought opportunism in its ranks and was tactically skilled and flexible. It wasn't immediately smashed by the Nazis upon their coming to power, but was nevertheless dealt heavy setbacks and was unable to play a decisive role in the coming events in Germany.

As well, Germany was a first-rate power, despite its defeat in World War I. And Hitler made few attempts to conceal his plan for imperialist expansion including his obsession to militarily crush Bolshevism in the USSR.

Hitler had the poorly disguised encouragement or sympathy of much of the bourgeoisie in the the U.S., Great Britain and France (e.g. in terms of financial backing), a support which was to become scandalous in the 1938 Munich agreement, in which Britain and France turned their ally Czechoslovakia over to Hitler in order to encourage him to invade to the East, i.e., to the USSR.

Thus, in 1935, Nazi Germany — and its partners-to-be (Japan and Italy) in the Anti-Comintern Pacts of 1936 and 37 — was emerging clearly as the spearhead of an international capitalist offensive against the socialist revolution, the national liberation movement and the socialist Soviet Union.

Thus — despite the fact that capitalism was collapsing in crisis, that social-democracy was facing the prospect of disintegration while the communist parties were working hard to gain influence, that an impulse of the working masses to the left was occurring and the liberation movements and com-

munist parties were active and fighting in such important oppressed countries as China and India — it was not the case that the revolution would develop from victory to victory in a straight line. The working class could not always be on the offensive and never be on the defensive; it would not just register victories without also suffering temporary defeats, even severe defeats, and without suffering torments from bourgeois oppression.

The situation was that, in response to the grave danger of revolution to their class, the bourgeoisie was utilizing all its forces of reaction and violence to drown socialism and the revolution in blood. And this fascist offensive was not without its temporary victories, for example in Germany, Austria and, later, in Spain, as well as temporary successes in its foreign aggression, for example, in Manchuria, Ethiopia and elsewhere. By the outbreak of World War II, the fascist blight had spread over a huge part of mainland Europe, both in Eastern Europe and Central and Western Europe.

The forces of labor and socialism were racing toward a big clash with the forces of capital and fascism. Would the social-democratic coalition with the bourgeoisie lose its hold on the masses and the radicalization of the masses proceed fast enough for the revolution to prevail? In Germany the race was temporarily lost by the working class. But this race was continuing throughout Europe. There was the grave threat of more fascist dictatorships being established in important countries such as France. There were also revolutionary factors that were on the rise. Both sides were marshalling forces and an international battle royal was shaping up.

The Seventh Congress had the task of orienting the world communist movement about these prospects. In the wake of the German, Austrian and other events, it was necessary to provide a major, authoritative analysis of the recent developments, including the setbacks; to adjust the CI's tactics to the new situation of the world fascist offensive and to the particular ways in which the working class was rising to action; and to correct shortcomings in the CI's previous work that it had become aware of.

But the Seventh Congress did not simply make adjustments in tactics to deal with the fascist offensive and to in general ensure that the CI's policies were in correspondence with the new situation.

It did put stress on the fight against fascism on a world scale, which was absolutely essential. And, of course, this had to be done in accordance both with the overall world situation and with the degree and particularities of the development of fascism from country to country. To not have put stress on the anti-fascist struggle at this time would have been to be asleep at the wheel, with disastrous consequences for the revolutionary movement, and would have led to immediate severe defeats. It would have been to neglect the major world clash that was in the making.

The problem is that, while correctly bringing to

the fore the anti-fascist struggle, the CI also introduced new, impermissible changes on various major questions of political line, changes that violated Leninism, and flagrantly so. Changes that damaged the revolutionary organization and struggle of the working masses and severely undermined it, immediately in some cases and in the long run everywhere.

2. Demagogy of the 7th Congress

One of the most disturbing things about Dimitrov's Report is that you can't discuss anything in it without also discussing the demagogy used in the presentation of virtually every point. A wide variety of tricks, subterfuge and misleading inferences make it difficult to grasp what Dimitrov is really saying.

For example, we are discussing what is new in Dimitrov's speeches. Dimitrov does many times refer to the fact that something new is being proposed in the tactics and orientation. But the way in which this is done, Dimitrov's method, leaves the reader actually unclear as to what it is that is actually new, what the new is replacing, and why this is being done.

Is the discussion of united front tactics new? No, the CI had been discussing united front tactics since the Third Congress.

Is the united front against fascism new? No, the CI in the Sixth Congress period and previously had spoken of and fought for the united front against the attacks of fascism many times.

In general, Dimitrov hides from the reader what is distinctly new: the rejection of previous assessments and of major conclusions of Leninism. This is done in many different ways. One method Dimitrov uses is paying lip service to the previous line, while actually introducing something different. For example, in one breath he seems to uphold the view that social-democracy was responsible for paving the way to fascism in Germany, and then many pages later he in fact retracts this assessment in an underhanded, indirect fashion.

Dimitrov also utilizes failsafe, loophole-type clauses. For example, he denies the existence of "left" social-democracy (which continues the social-democratic treachery under the cover of hypocritical "left" phrases), a long-standing, important assessment by the CI of one of the trends in social-democracy -- and then later refers to "left" social-democratic demagogues, as if to say "Who me? Deny the condemnation of 'left' social-democracy? No, see page such and such! There's nothing new here, orthodoxy is being upheld."

He also makes a big fuss in presenting some previous views, as if these were some brilliant new discoveries, with the idea of creating a definite effect.

Dimitrov is even very indirect, you might even say cagey, about saying that he is introducing a new tactical line (and, in fact, the changes are much

more than just tactical). Not until page 95 (of the old, standard, New Century Publishers' edition), at the beginning of the "Speech in Reply to the Discussion", does he openly say that he is "revising our policy and tactics".

And while creating a big mystery about what the new line actually is, Dimitrov does not present a clear assessment of what was wrong with the old policies that are being replaced, that is, with the Sixth Congress period's (and previous) strategy and tactics. There is no careful assessment of what was right and wrong with the old orientation. Instead, he creates the atmosphere, or mood, that it contained a lot of garbage and should be forgotten as quickly as possible.

For example, he positively rails against doctrinairism (dogmatism) and sectarianism, referring to cut-and-dried schemes, lifeless formulas, phlegmatic (sluggish) reasoning, stereotyped practices, phrasemongering, pedantry, scholastic tinkering, mere book knowledge, abstractions, bare appeals for the proletarian dictatorship, and so forth. While undoubtedly there were "left" and sectarian errors that needed to be corrected in the past, this did not require painting the past as if it were just one foolish mistake after another. As well, there were opportunist, rightist errors in the different parties, but Dimitrov shows little concern for the difficult struggle against rightism that was needed, merely mentioning the danger of opportunism in a paragraph or two in a routine, obligatory, ho-hum spirit. What is more, Dimitrov drops previous assessments concerning the nature of certain sectarian errors and the need to fight the underlying conceptions that give rise to them, such as that the "left" sectarian error of denigrating the struggle for partial demands was often based on the underlying rightist conception that could only conceive of the use of reformist methods in the struggle for partial demands.

And when Dimitrov descends from the world of sweeping, general criticism to the activity of a particular party, (1) he tends to caricature, or exaggerate the problem, and (2) he raises old examples of errors as if these were new discoveries, when in fact most of these errors were caught by the CI when it was pursuing the previous orientation and had been duly criticized and corrected.

In addition to creating mysteries as to what the new line is and what the old line was, Dimitrov also repeats a number of things, which give his Report an aura of orthodoxy, but which subsequent history showed were not central points to his Report and were later dropped. For example, he refers to the necessity for the proletariat to organize soviets in setting up its state rule. Perhaps it is just to call these things window dressing, or perhaps the line was still in transition at the Seventh Congress and these things were dropped in the further push to the right after the Congress.

In regard to all this demagogy, and more, several points follow:

(1) There is eclecticism galore in Dimitrov's speeches. But this is not the eclecticism born of confusion, but is the insertion of contradictory points to throw the reader off the scent of the departures from Leninism that are being introduced. And all of this subterfuge raises your eyebrows. Correct views don't need a dishonest presentation to win their place in the world.

(2) It is necessary to compare the ideas of Dimitrov's Report to the actual practice of the new orientation to see what is the actual line and what is just camouflage, just orthodox-sounding phrases for window dressing. In this direction, some study of the French Communist Party in the mid 30's has been done and a report will be presented on this. [See the articles elsewhere in this issue of the Supplement on the experience of the French Communist Party in implementing the new line.] Of course, the whole question of Mr. Earl Browder comes up in this way too. [Browder's revisionism corroded the revolutionary line of the CPUSA beginning in the mid-1930s and eventually destroyed altogether its communist character. For a brief description of this, see Resolution III.A "The History of the Fight to Build the Political Party of the Working Class" in the Documents of the Second Congress of the MLP, USA in the Jan. 1, 1984 issue of The Workers' Advocate.]

(3) It is clear that Dimitrov takes a non-Bolshevik approach to summing up the experience of the CI and to defining the coming tasks. The Bolshevik approach would be to construct a balance sheet of the strengths and weaknesses of the old policies and practices as shown by the actual results in practice. The revolutionary movement and socialism had advanced; the communist parties had not only maintained themselves as revolutionary parties against rightist pressures, but were fighting hard for the masses. The bourgeoisie had unsheathed the fascist sword in order to fight the revolution, and it had dealt the proletariat some definite defeats and was mounting its most severe challenge to the revolution. At the same time, this fascist offensive was itself a sign of the instability of the bourgeois order, and the grave clashes to come; while requiring great sacrifice and the exertion of every ounce of fighting capacity by the working masses, it would also call into question bourgeois rule itself. How effective had the tactics and orientation of the CI in the last period been in preserving and increasing the fighting strength of the communist parties? What changes were needed in mobilizing the widest sections of the masses against fascism? To what degree were those defeats that had taken place inevitable given **objective factors**, i.e., the strength of the contending forces, and to what degree could the defeats be attributed to **errors in political line** made by the CI and the communist parties?

Dimitrov takes a completely non-serious approach to these issues.

First, an absolutely euphoric assessment is made of the objective situation. The difficulties are

glossed over. The basic view is that everything is just rosy.

Second, so therefore, if the objective situation is so favorable, was the old line of the CI and the Executive Committee of the CI (ECCI) said to be the source of the setbacks that had come up? Well no, not this either.

Dimitrov, a member of the CI leadership, avoids doing any self-criticism of the previous policies of the CI and ECCI. He puts all the blame for the setbacks on individual parties, particularly the Communist Party of Germany (CPG). And he does so in extravagant language, clearly exaggerating the errors that were made and the difference they made to the struggle. So the impression is that the ECCI was perfect.

But this is a contradiction. Why is the CI "correcting" its entire line in order to deal with the mistakes of those "left" sectarians in the CPG? The view is actually that, "The line was fine, but we are forced to correct and change all of it." An honest approach, on the other hand, would be to discuss openly the strengths and weaknesses of the views and activities both of the CI leadership, such as the ECCI and Stalin, and of the individual parties.

Our view is that the CI had not made major errors of principle, but had a definite problem with tactical inflexibilities. These should have been corrected, while persisting in the generally correct line. In fact, the world was in a situation where to have persisted with certain wooden tactics would have meant you were dead in the water. They had to be corrected.

It is possible that even with these improvements, the bourgeoisie might have been able to inflict additional temporary defeats on the revolutionary forces. Dimitrov's euphoric assessments about the impending establishment of revolutionary unity with social-democracy against fascism, about the prevention of a new imperialist world war via peace agitation, and so forth, amounted to closing one's eyes, or attempting to close the revolutionary movement's eyes, to the real situation. It was like advising a canoeist to shoot the rapids with his eyes closed. But though the coming period would be a difficult one for the revolutionary proletariat, and there would be both victories and painful defeats, the prospects were still that the coming trial of strength would result in the growth of the revolutionary working class movement and turning the tables on the class enemy. The Leninist line would have strengthened the proletarian movement and also prevented the fruits of the anti-fascist struggles from having been thrown away.

Let's now examine some of the significant opportunist deviations advanced at the Seventh Congress

3. On the Issue of Fascism Itself

3. First, there are the wrong views put forward on questions closely associated with the analysis of

fascism itself. Under this category there are three topics to be taken up:

- 1) the wrong view that denies the bourgeois class basis of fascism and promotes the liberal bourgeoisie as fighters against fascism;
- 2) the wrong view that detaches the anti-fascist fight from the socialist revolution; and
- 3) the wrong view of catering to petty-bourgeois prejudices, including petty-bourgeois nationalism, in the fight against fascist ideology.

A) First, on the class basis of fascism.

To begin with, it can be noted that Dimitrov's Report not only demands that the communists bury the hatchet with the social-democrats, but also demands alliance with the liberal parties of the bourgeoisie. He abandons the previous line of the CI of fighting the social-democratic coalition with the bourgeoisie and instead demands that the liberal bourgeoisie be regarded as one of the basic anti-fascist forces. True, unlike what he does with social-democracy, Dimitrov does not quite dare openly say that he is for alliance with bourgeois parties — not by the name of "bourgeois parties." Instead he prettifies the liberal bourgeois parties, such as the French Radicals which he explicitly names, as parties of the petty-bourgeoisie.

In order to create a theoretical basis for prettifying the liberal bourgeoisie as anti-fascist fighters, he has to find a way to negate the class struggle. In essence, his view is that the class struggle against the bourgeoisie ceases to be the issue as soon as the issue of fascism arises, at which time the basic issue is supposed to be contradictions among the bourgeoisie.

Dimitrov says that fascism is the rule of the "most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialist elements of finance capital." (See the section of Dimitrov's Report entitled "The Class Character of Fascism.")

Now this is true if you are talking about, for example, Hitler's Party being the most reactionary party among all the capitalist parties in Germany. But Dimitrov then goes on to pretend that the most reactionary elements of finance capital necessarily have severe contradictions with the mass of the exploiters whose interests they defend.

The fascist government is indeed the rule of the most bloodthirsty, most reactionary, elements, a government which, however, if it is to consolidate itself and have a certain durability, rallies the bourgeoisie around it.

Any government is the rule of certain elements. If it consolidates its power, it is because it rallies definite classes around it. For example, one could say that a communist government is the government of the most resolute, most class-conscious, most revolutionary elements, a government which, however, if it is to be stable, rallies the whole working class around it. A true dictatorship of the proletariat must be able to rally the working

masses, including backward masses still under the influence of various illusions, into socialist construction, into defense against imperialist invasion, etc.

Similarly a capitalist government aims to rally all the capitalists around it. And so does that particular variety of capitalist government, the fascist regime. In Germany and Italy the fascist regimes succeeded in rallying the bourgeoisie as a class around themselves. It may happen in other fascist dictatorships that the bourgeoisie itself is split into different factions and is not as organized as in Germany. Nevertheless, in all cases, one can only understand politics by seeing what class interests are being served and which classes rally to which side.

However, the ordinary interpretation of Dimitrov's quotation, reiterated many times since by right opportunists of all shades, is that the bourgeoisie is split into fascist and anti-fascist wings, and the issue is the struggle between these two wings of the bourgeoisie. The fact that the bourgeoisie as a whole inclines in one direction or the other and works to accomplish its class aims is obscured or forgotten.

Once the class issue is thrown aside, one can understand nothing. Why did fascism spread in the 1930's? Because suddenly one section of the bourgeoisie became a little stronger than the other, upsetting the equilibrium?

Hogwash. The bourgeoisie was moving to attack the revolution, which scared it. This didn't mean that all the bourgeoisie, unanimously, decides "We need a Hitler." But it inclines more and more to the method of the big stick (which it is never far from), it fosters fascist groups and finds them useful, the liberals either lose support in the bourgeoisie or themselves incline to reaction (or both), a section of the bourgeoisie longs for the fascist coup, etc. If a fascist coup is attempted before the bourgeoisie as a whole is convinced of the need for it, it may be suppressed by the bourgeois state. Hitler's beer hall putsch in Bavaria in 1923 was quickly suppressed by the authorities (but they only tapped the fascists on the wrist because one had to expect such minor indiscretions as attempting to overthrow the government at a time when the bourgeoisie was fostering underground armies and reactionary paramilitary forces as the German bourgeoisie was at that time). In other cases, the ruling bourgeoisie may not suppress the coup itself, but it may stand aside if the masses rise to wipe out the coup. At other times, the bourgeoisie rallies with enthusiasm around the fascist coup. But even then, under the fascist regime, if the bourgeoisie sees that the regime is tottering, due to the upsurge of the masses or due to military defeats, a bourgeois opposition to fascism may emerge with the aim of ensuring that the downfall of the fascist party does not endanger the rule of capital.

Dimitrov's analysis, while paying lip service to

class terms, actually wipes out the class basis of fascism and substitutes a vulgar conception of some elements just happening to be fascist and some just happening to be anti-fascist. In the Seventh Congress itself, this is an ideological basis for alliance with the liberals.

Germany

Thus Dimitrov suggests that fascist rule, the rule of Hitler's Party, did not have the support of essentially the entire German big bourgeoisie. He suggests that fascism was not the rule of the capitalist class, but only of a section of them. He implies that there is another section of finance capitalists, presumably the liberals, who are progressive, who are staunch opponents of fascism; and furthermore the working class should accommodate its struggle to what is acceptable to these liberals.

Elsewhere in the text, Dimitrov refers to fascism as being based on simply "finance capital" or "the bourgeoisie," but this is not stressed. This is an example of the eclecticism-by-design mentioned earlier, an example of an orthodox loophole inserted to cover his tracks.

Dimitrov's unstated, but implied, conclusion about the alleged splits in the bourgeoisie is not backed up by a shred of evidence. And it contradicts sharply the experience of Germany, where before the nazi takeover the entire big bourgeoisie more and more looked to the fascist big stick to beat the revolutionary movement -- some thinking that they could subordinate the nazis to traditional conservative rule, while others being more for a fascist regime -- and after the nazi takeover, they rallied behind it. Even the Social-Democratic Party, servant of the bourgeoisie that it was, appeased the nazis.

Dimitrov does not say that he is referring to Germany or any particular country for that matter. But the whole world would have to assume that he is doing so -- inasmuch as the German events were dominating world politics at the time. Now it is conceivable that the bourgeoisie could be divided over whether or not to go over to fascist forms of rule. Later we deal more with the Social-Democratic Party, which doesn't particularly like open fascist rule -- but hates the revolutionary working class movement more than it fears fascism. This sort of stand may also be found among the bourgeois liberals. And the working class movement is often faced with having to have flexible tactics to deal with the liberals or the social-democrats, when they have influence on the masses and are posturing against the reaction, and not just say "down with the liberals." There is the example of the tactics Lenin used with respect to the Kerensky regime of "socialist" opportunists during the Kornilov revolt in 1917. But this still does not deny the basis of fascism in the class interests of the bourgeoisie, nor the fact that the big bourgeoisie as a whole was more and more inclining to reaction in Europe at that time.

Dimitrov was not trying to sum up the German events, as the whole world might have assumed, when he defined fascism as the rule of one section of the big bourgeoisie. Instead, it looks like he simply set out to create an opening for the view that various bourgeois political trends are an anti-fascist force for the working class to ally with.

Dimitrov never says precisely who the other sections of finance capital are: less reactionary elements who are neutral and indifferent about fascism? Liberals? Traditional conservatives? Progressive anti-fascists? But he implies that this "other section" are staunch anti-fascist fighters and allies of the working class.

Severe Struggles Within the Bourgeoisie?

The main way he does this is to conjure up a "severe struggle" within the bourgeois camp before and after the rise to power of fascism; such a severe struggle that sometimes it breaks out into "armed clashes". Without saying so in so many words, the impression is created that one side of these clashes must be an important anti-fascist force to be dealt with. He says

"...fascism usually comes to power in the course of a mutual, and at times severe, struggle against the old bourgeois parties, or a definite section of these parties, in the course of a struggle even within the fascist camp itself--a struggle which at times leads to armed clashes, as we have witnessed in the case of Germany, Austria and other countries." (From the section of his Report entitled "The Class Character of Fascism". This image is created again in the section "Fascism--a Ferocious but Unstable Power" where he states that fascism "lends the conflicts that arise among the bourgeoisie the character of sharp and at times bloody collisions,...")

But it is one thing for fascism to come to power during a political crisis, it is quite another to paint a picture of the liberal bourgeoisie taking to arms against fascism. For example in Germany, there was no severe struggle between fascist and anti-fascist sections of the bourgeoisie during Hitler's rise or after it. There were various economic and political contradictions between this or that section of the bourgeoisie, including disputes over how much and how fast to fascize the state. But on one thing they were all agreed: the task was to find a way to defeat the revolutionary movement, and it was their right to use terror and violence against the masses.

As to Dimitrov's talk of armed clashes between such mythical forces, this is a sneaky trick. There was an armed clash in June '34 in Germany between two different sections of the Nazis (and this took place at the time when a section of the stormtroopers were becoming disillusioned with the Nazis' failure to carry out the radical steps against big

capital that they had appeared to promise). And there was an armed clash in Austria in July '34 when the pro-Italian, fascist head of state Dollfuss was assassinated by pan-German Hitler fascists. It seems as if Dimitrov is demagogically trying to conjure up the year-old memory of such armed clashes and attribute them, by way of suggestion, to pro- and anti-fascist sections.

Not only this, but Dimitrov says the working class should utilize these mythical, severe, anti-fascist struggles in the same breath as calling for the mobilization of the broadest strata. So the whole mood is created that there are important bourgeois anti-fascist forces, engaged in a severe struggle against the transformation of the bourgeois democratic form of rule to the fascist form of rule, and that the proletariat must unite with these forces against the fascists. And in the context of the constant diatribe against left sectarianism in the Report, the idea is necessarily created that only self-satisfied sectarians would refuse to do so.

Not Just With the Liberals...

As we have said, when Dimitrov talks about the struggles between the different elements of the bourgeoisie, he does not say who the good section of the bourgeoisie are supposed to be and does not identify them as the liberals. In fact, the fights among the bourgeoisie that he listed often involved other forces: the fight between homegrown Austrian fascism and German Nazi fascism; the fight between, on the one hand, those reactionary bourgeois who believed that a reactionary republic or the local monarchy could wield the big stick for them and, on the other hand, the pro-Nazi forces on the other; etc. Thus a rationale appears to have been created for alliance with any part of the bourgeoisie that happens to have a contradiction with the most visible enemy of the moment.

This appears to be related to various maneuvering by the Soviet Union and the local communists that took place later in Eastern Europe as fascism collapsed at the end of World War II. Deals were concocted with various exploiting forces, many of whom could hardly be called liberals — some were actually in the ruling regime or were the ruling regime until the last moment when, seeing the defeat of the Axis, the advance of the Soviet Army and the growing activity of the local population, they were ready to make last-minute deals to disassociate themselves from the rapidly falling Axis war machine. One result was that pro-fascist King Michael of Romania received the highest Soviet wartime medal, the Order of Victory, because he did not order resistance to the Red Army when it marched in. Later he was finally forced to abdicate his throne on Dec. 30, 1947, and he promptly fled Romania. Comrade Enver Hoxha, in his book The Titoites, denounces the giving of honors to King Michael as "impermissible opportunism on the part of the Soviets." (See page 518.) But

Enver doesn't even raise the question of where such stands could have come from.

But Certainly With the Liberals

However, at the time of the Seventh Congress, Dimitrov was mainly aiming at the liberals. His theorizing on the class basis of fascism seems to be an attempt to push the international communist movement skipping down the primrose lane of liberal-labor, reformist politics.

As well, study of the experience of the Communist Party of France after the Seventh Congress tends to strongly confirm that this hidden meaning of the Seventh Congress Report was in fact the "inside dope." The CPF's stands were promoted as the model of the application of the Seventh Congress tactics. And in France the CP was cozying up to the liberal bourgeois "Radicals" (the Radical or Radical-Socialist Party) as part of the new tactics. Now the Radicals, though increasingly gaining the hatred of wide masses for utter money-grubbing corruption and through repeatedly jumping into the arms of the parties to their right, were not a fascist party. And it would have been stupid to reject this distinction. But this didn't mean the proletariat should jump into their arms either.

Similarly, in the U.S., neither the Communist Party's alliance with Roosevelt and the Democratic Party, nor Browder's entire arsenal of liberal-labor politics were criticized by the CI in the latter '30s to our knowledge.

In fact, Dimitrov hints more than once that FDR was quite a fine fellow for the working class. For example, he stresses that "...the most reactionary circles of American finance capital ... are attacking Roosevelt ..." (See the passage "The Struggle Against Fascism Must Be Concretized") to imply that Roosevelt was not also anti-working class, but progressive. He also pointedly leaves out the presidency from a list of offices that a Workers' and Farmers' Party in the U.S. would contest. (See section A on the U.S. under "Cardinal Questions of the United Front in Individual Countries.") All this wasn't lost on Browder, to whom a wink was as good as a nod.

And since this line was never repudiated, it seems to be the basis for similar, perhaps more open, conceptions advanced in the world communist movement in the years immediately after World War II (and before the death of Stalin and the rise of open Khrushchovite revisionism). Our study of the post-World War II period showed that there was a tendency to not denounce U.S. imperialism, but instead to talk about various warmongers in Washington and other such formulations, letting the ruling class as a whole off the hook and suggesting the existence of reasonable imperialists to unite with. Thus, there seems to be continuity from the Seventh Congress to the post-World War II period on this issue. It also seems that this opens the door to the Khrushchovite theories about "two opposing power centers in Wash-

ington, the peaceful White House and the warmongers in the Pentagon."

So, Dimitrov's wrong views on the class basis of fascism, his prettification of the liberals, his strong hints in the direction of constructing a liberal-labor alliance, lead to consequences with which we are quite familiar.

B) Detaching the Fight Against Fascism from the Socialist Revolution

B) Secondly, Dimitrov detaches the fight against fascism from the socialist revolution. He declares that the fight against fascism requires that work for the socialist revolution be set aside for the moment and postponed to the indefinite future. Instead the struggle against fascism is supposed to require staying within the framework of bourgeois democracy, putting forward the strengthening of the bourgeois democratic state as the goal of the struggle, and dropping the communist exposure of the nature of bourgeois democracy as a class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. This however is a sure formula for undermining the struggle against fascism, for that struggle must be based on the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, and the fighting masses inevitably flow beyond the bounds of bourgeois democracy, while even the bourgeois-democratic bourgeoisie and state strive to subvert and crush that revolutionary initiative of the toilers.

Dimitrov says in the "Speech in Reply to the Discussion" in the section entitled "Attitude Toward Bourgeois Democracy" that:

"... Now the fascist counter-revolution is attacking bourgeois democracy in an effort to establish a most barbaric regime of exploitation and suppression of the toiling masses. Now the toiling masses in a number of capitalist countries are faced with the necessity of making a **definite** choice, and of making it today, not between proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois democracy, but between bourgeois democracy and fascism."

If all Dimitrov meant by this was that communists must fight against fascist coups even when the working masses are not yet in a position to carry that fight all the way to the socialist revolution, so that their struggle will instead, for the moment, result only in maintaining or restoring bourgeois-democratic forms (such as parliament) and various democratic rights, then this passage would be unobjectionable. It wouldn't be anything new, it would be old, well-worn truths, but it wouldn't be wrong either. But, it turns out, Dimitrov means far more than this. He continues and spells out, especially using the example of Germany but speaking in general, that the communist parties must drop the goal of the socialist revolution in the world situation and epoch of the 1930's. He says:

"Besides, we have now a situation which differs from that which existed, for example, in the epoch of capitalist stabilization. At

that time the fascist danger was not as acute as it is today. At that time it was bourgeois dictatorship in the form of bourgeois democracy that the revolutionary workers were facing in a number of countries and it was against bourgeois democracy that they were concentrating their fire. ...

"But could the Communists maintain this stand when the fascist movement began to raise its head, when, for instance, in 1932, the fascists in Germany were organizing and arming hundreds of thousands of storm troopers against the working class? Of course not. It was the mistake of the Communists in a number of countries, particularly in Germany, that they failed to take into account the changes which had taken place, but continued to repeat those slogans, maintain those tactical positions which had been correct a few years before..."

Here he is referring not to the day-to-day tactics, but to the overall stand, previously maintained, of working for a proletarian revolution, combatting illusions in above-class democracy, and exposing the bourgeois-democratic state as a ruthless, if concealed, machine to enforce the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

His opportunist line of abandoning work for the proletarian revolution is consistent with his suggesting that the liberal bourgeoisie are anti-fascist fighters and a basic part of the people's front. After all, no section of the bourgeoisie is going to be wildly enthusiastic to play ball with forces aiming for the expropriation of their capital. The price of fawning on the liberals, even those who say a word or two against fascism, is to give up those "unrealistic socialist ideas". It is to give up anything that goes beyond the bounds of the parliamentary bourgeois republic. And it is to keep within narrow bounds the social demands for the working class and its allies as these demands empty the moneybags of the bourgeoisie.

To eliminate the perspective of the socialist revolution from the day-to-day struggle is to facilitate the victory of fascism. It means to turn away from the mass struggle in favor of captivating illusions about the power of parliamentary maneuvers and paper constitutions. When Dimitrov centers the struggle against fascism on the bourgeois-parliamentary talk shop, it is a major revision of the Marxist-Leninist conception of the state and a replacement of struggle with parliamentary cretinism.

The struggle against fascism is strengthened the more the socialist perspective is systematically imbued, revolutionary methods are employed, social demands are raised, etc. In the anti-fascist movement. This strengthens the fighting capacity of the working class, which is at the core of the anti-fascist fight. The proletariat may not always and everywhere immediately raise the slogan "socialist revolution" against fascism. It may confine itself to raising anti-fascist slogans at times. But it

must base its tactics against fascism on the strategy of the socialist revolution.

Furthermore, at a time of profound revolutionary crisis, the only real alternatives more and more become either a period of utter reaction (such as fascism) or the revolution. At such times, the political deception and democratic illusions upon which the parliamentary system rest become incapable of holding the masses down. The remnants of bourgeois-democratic rights and parliamentary forms are utilized by the working class to organize the revolutionary movement. The bourgeoisie sees that, besides deception, it needs a period of open terror and violent repression, a bloodletting to "teach the masses a lesson" and decapitate their revolutionary leadership, in order to preserve the old order and capitalist property. The bourgeoisie prepares its tools of repression -- it fascizes the state, beefs up its military and police, organizes street gangs and murder squads. At the crucial moment it suspends all so-called constitutional guarantees, sweeps aside parliament (or reduces it to a complete shell), and strikes the blow.

This does not mean that fascism or social revolution are always the only possibilities, even in a time of revolutionary possibilities. If the fight against fascism has some success but is stopped half-way, there is the possibility it will result in a bourgeois-democratic regime. But the proletariat cannot base its tactics on the goal of stopping the revolution half-way, on the goal of bourgeois democracy. The proletariat cannot wage a serious struggle, requiring mass enthusiasm and sacrifice, while deciding in advance that it will be hoodwinked or will lose the fruits of its victory or will establish the same old order that gave rise to the need to fight fascism in the first place.

Not Constitutions, but Definite Class Forces Fight Fascism

Dimitrov's wrong line rests on a wrong assessment of the relationship of bourgeois democracy to fascism. Both the parliamentary system and the fascist system are wielded by one and the same bourgeoisie. It is not the bourgeois-democratic constitution that fights fascism, but definite class forces. And the bourgeois-democratic state itself, its bureaucracy and military, are generally nests of reaction which fascism relies on in its assault on the masses and in its fascist coup. Without the preliminary fascization of the state, without support from within the state machine and from the bourgeoisie, (and without the role of social-democracy and liberalism in paralyzing the working masses) fascism could hardly come to power at all.

In the Sixth Congress period there was a correct appreciation of the fascization taking place in the bourgeois-democratic states and of the fact that the revolutionary crisis leads to the question being put starkly: bourgeois reaction or revolution. But the CI in this period tended to be somewhat rigid in its

understanding of what it meant to expose bourgeois democracy and combat bourgeois-democratic illusions and to maintain the standpoint of the socialist revolution.

Dimitrov, however, is even more rigid at the Seventh Congress, but from the other direction: he puts a complete wall between the fight against fascism and revolutionary work, and on this basis he draws the conclusion of damning to hell the strategy for socialist revolution (at least for the present epoch).

The fight against the fascist offensive; against austerity measures, pay cuts, and unemployment; against political reaction and terror; against the imperialist war buildup and military adventures; and against the racist and chauvinist campaigns of the bourgeoisie must be pursued as part of the preparations for the socialist revolution. Not electoral illusions, but the mass revolutionary struggle, can defeat fascist coups, and only depriving the bourgeoisie of political power can remove the threat of fascism altogether.

This does not mean that the electoral struggle could be ignored by the communist parties in the 1930's, or pursued only half-heartedly. It would have been absurd to allow the fascists to waltz into power through elections. But even proper utilization of elections is impossible once one abandons the revolutionary mass struggle, and illusions that the bourgeoisie will allow things to be settled by constitutional means at a moment of crisis are nothing but parliamentary cretinism. It is notable that the nazis had reached their height and were on the way down, electorally, when the bourgeoisie, frightened that the nazi party might be disintegrating, poured out additional financial aid and had other bourgeois parties take part in installing Hitler legally in power.

The embellishing of bourgeois democracy, which is Dimitrov's replacement for work for the revolution, is also a theme that comes sharply into focus in the post-World War II period. For example in France and Italy, the post-war constitutions were described by the communist parties as something that went beyond mere bourgeois democracy.

The Experience of the Anti-Fascist Struggles of the 1920's

Finally, let us examine Dimitrov's attempt at historical argument. He says that the old line, the struggle for proletarian revolution, was acceptable in the 1920's, but no longer in the 1930's. The question arises: did the working class face the threat of fascist and militarist coups in the 1920's? If so, and if it was able to fight them while maintaining the stand for proletarian revolution, then Dimitrov's whole argument falls on its face.

Dimitrov refers to Germany. He states that "In Germany, they [the revolutionary workers] fought against the Weimar Republic, not be-

cause it was a republic, but because it was a **bourgeois** republic, which was suppressing the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, especially in 1918-1920 and in 1923."

So 1918-1920 in Germany is a time when the old tactics were correct. But what happened in 1920? In March 1920 the monarchist landowner Kapp and various reactionary generals threw aside the social-democratic government, which offered no resistance, and proclaimed a military dictatorship. This was known as the "Kapp putsch". The workers were faced with an immediate choice between military dictatorship and struggle. A general strike of the workers of Berlin brought down the would-be dictators. But, due to illusions in the social-democrats and the bourgeois-democratic order, the workers simply restored the bourgeois republic.

If the communists were right to maintain the stand for socialist revolution in 1920, despite the necessity to deal with the Kapp putsch, why would they have to abandon the revolution in order to oppose Hitler? If illusions in bourgeois-democracy in 1920 misled the German workers in the fight against the Kapp putsch, so that they failed to root out German reaction and instead simply reestablished a bourgeois republic, then how did this fail to be a danger facing the anti-Hitler struggle?

The Kapp putsch is, in fact, similar in many ways to the Kornilov revolt in August 1917 of tsarist generals in Russia against the bourgeois-democratic Kerensky government. Here we have an example of how the Bolsheviks handled the struggle against reactionary coups. The Bolsheviks were flexible in tactics but didn't abandon their basic stand for socialist revolution. They pushed forward the mass mobilization against Kornilov, which caused his collapse, and correctly held that this mass upsurge revitalized, not Kerensky's bourgeois-democratic government, but the revolutionary movement.

How does Dimitrov handle this history? He simply ignores it. He blandly remarks that "At that time the fascist danger was not as acute as it is today." Tell that to the Italian workers, who also faced a fascist coup in the early 1920's but lost, due to the treachery of the social-democrats and the reformist trade union leaders. If the German and Russian workers hadn't fought successfully against reactionary coups, they too would have suffered the torments of reaction in the 1920's as did the Italians, Bulgarians, Poles and others.

C) Catering to Petty-Bourgeois Prejudices

C) Dimitrov also introduces a flabby spirit of catering to petty-bourgeois prejudices in his Report. This shows up clearly in the chapter "The Ideological Struggle Against Fascism."

Fascism in Germany and elsewhere, while relying on open terror to repress the working class, also utilized an entire arsenal of nationalist demagogy and social demagogy. It made empty promises to relieve the economic distress of the masses and

pretended to champion the anti-capitalist sentiments of the masses. Through these means it sought to channel the discontent of the backward sections of the masses, particularly elements from the petty-bourgeoisie, peasantry and labor aristocracy, into a reactionary mass movement against the working class. Consequently, the proletariat's struggle against fascism and the fascist movement required a relentless struggle against the fascist demagogy.

But Dimitrov gives bad advice for this struggle.

The nazis promoted fanatical hatred against other nationalities, and virulent racism and anti-semitism, while also promoting the chauvinist myth of the German "master race". In combat against this fascist ideology, the Communist Party needed to vigorously uphold proletarian internationalism; to instill in the masses the fraternal friendship and solidarity of the toilers of all nationalities based on their struggle against the common enemy. The Communist Party was faced with the task of promoting the unity of the German toilers with the workers of all lands in pursuit of the common revolutionary goal.

Dimitrov however does not present this orientation. Instead he stresses, essentially, that the Communist Party's propaganda should compete with the fascists over who were the true nationalists, the true upholders of the general national interests -- at a time when not national struggle but class struggle was before the German working masses. Dimitrov drops many, many hints in this direction. This is done under the pretext of combatting national nihilist errors. But Dimitrov gives no examples of such errors in this section, perhaps because, as we suspect, there were no significant examples to give.

However, in an earlier section of the Report, Dimitrov makes a criticism of the Communist Party of Germany for allegedly failing to do correct work in opposition to the heavy exploitation of the German masses by foreign imperialism through the reparations burden imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. (See the latter part of the passage entitled "Is the Victory of Fascism Inevitable?") But this criticism seems odd in that:

1) It is so harsh. The errors made in this direction by the CP of Germany do not seem to have been as large as Dimitrov says. Dimitrov is so emphatic that it is easy to forget that the CP of Germany traditionally fought on this issue (and the "national Bolsheviks" in Germany had even gone too far on this issue). From Dimitrov's grand manner one would hardly suspect that Dimitrov is referring simply to slowness in producing one particular "program for social and national emancipation" with regard to a particular election campaign.

2) Dimitrov implies that this was a central error of the German CP that was a major reason why the nazis were able to seize power. But the errors that were made related to events in 1930 only and were already criticized by the CI and the CP of Germany in the 1930-31 period, well before the cru-

cial moment and fully four years previously.

3) The reparations payments, the main burden on the masses from the Versailles Treaty, were stopped by the Hoover moratorium in July 1931, again four years previously.

Despite this, Dimitrov seems to be calling for the continuation of a major agitational campaign against the Versailles Treaty. But virtually all that remained of it as far as Germany was concerned were the following provisions:

1) Possibly some of the ban on German rearmament, but this was becoming something of a dead letter. Of course, if the proletariat seized power and faced an invasion by counter-revolutionary troops, this might be an issue. But agitation on this question during Hitler's reign could hardly be of benefit to the German communists.

2) There were also various territorial questions, such as the loss to France of Alsace-Lorraine (which may well have been in accord with the pro-French sympathy of this area which had been stripped from France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71), the prohibition against Austria uniting with Germany, the Danzig and Polish Corridor questions, etc. But merely listing these questions reveals that the issue wasn't nationalist agitation on these questions but internationalist agitation. One should not compete with the nazis on nationalist fervor for a Greater Germany, but debunk the blaming of Germany's problems on workers of other lands.

3) And there were other issues such as Germany losing its colonies. But the working class could not fight for their return!

To lay stress on the Versailles Treaty under these conditions is more than strange. (This is indeed one question where the 1930's were different than the 1920's.) Yet this interpretation of Dimitrov's intent is apparently born out by the subsequent practice of the CP of Germany, which it seems kept up a certain propaganda stress against the Versailles Treaty long after the Seventh Congress.

In addition to the many hints for competing with the fascists in nationalist terms, perhaps what is even more noteworthy is what Dimitrov fails to say. He gives no call for, and does not even mention, the struggle against the rabid anti-semitism of the nazis. (In the Abridged Stenographic Report of the Seventh Congress, only the German delegation raises this question and refers briefly to the actions they had organized against anti-semitic pogroms.) This is incredible. Anti-semitism was a huge issue in Germany by this time, as well as in France and throughout Europe. How can the fascist mass movement be defeated if one doesn't combat the prejudices of the masses swept up in the fascist demagoguery?

As well, Dimitrov, in his preoccupation with upholding the national idea and heritage, even fails to call for combatting the Hitlerites social demagoguery -- their "anti-capitalist" pretensions. But the mass support of the fascist movement was due in large part to the false economic promises Hitler

made to the peasants, crushed petty bourgeoisie, and so on. It is strange not to point to Hitler's weak point here and not to call for agitation exposing that not a single mark (German currency) of the Krupp or Thyssen monopolists or of I.G. Farben (huge German monopoly which the nazis, before seizing power, had at one time pretended to denounce) had been touched by the "national revolution."

Furthermore, when discussing his five conditions for forming a united party with the social-democrats, Dimitrov makes no mention of the need for the social-democrats to support the fight for the liberation of the colonies of one's "own" bourgeoisie. Yet the importance of this condition for a proletarian revolutionary party was stressed as point eight of Lenin's 21 terms of admission into the CI.

Thus, in this section of Dimitrov's Report, we can see definite tendencies toward petty-bourgeois nationalism. Furthermore, a key element of petty-bourgeois nationalism is to put aside the struggle against one's "own" bourgeoisie, pinning the blame for the masses' exploitation mainly on foreign powers, on the lack of "complete national sovereignty and independence", etc. Petty-bourgeois nationalism in particular is a major theme in the line of the international communist movement after World War II, when every petty-bourgeois nationalist, democratic, and pacifist prejudice is trumpeted to the skies.

The Seventh Congress Report gives a big hint in this direction.

4. On the Attitude Toward Social-Democracy

4. There are the wrong views put forward on the attitude to be taken toward social-democracy. There are four basic topics on this to be taken up, and on each point Dimitrov contradicts the previous position of the CI:

A) The wrong view that social-democracy no longer supports the bourgeoisie and has become pro-working class.

B) The prettification and cover-up of the pro-fascist role of social-democracy.

C) The wrong view that the "left" phrasemongering trend of social-democracy no longer exists. And

D) The wrong perspective for the communist parties to work for merger with the social-democratic parties, not to wipe out social-democratic influence in the working class..

A) Has Social-Democracy Become Pro-Working Class?

A) Dimitrov suggests that social-democracy has lost its character as a buttress of bourgeois rule. There are no references to social-democracy as a bourgeois force. There are many references to it as a pro-working class force, and as usual, many of these are in the form of strong hints. This is a crucial issue from which many other wrong conclusions follow, so it deserves discussion in some depth.

Dimitrov is a little more direct in denying that social-democracy is a bulwark of the bourgeoisie than he is in changing the line on some other issues. In his "Speech in Reply to the Discussion", he says, in the section "The Role of Social-Democracy and Its Attitude Toward the United Front of the Proletariat," that it is

"increasingly difficult and in some countries, actually impossible for Social-Democracy to preserve its former role [already past tense] of bulwark of the bourgeoisie."

He says that "failure to understand this is particularly harmful in those countries in which the fascist dictatorship has deprived social-democracy of its legal status." (Emphasis added) In other words, it is harmful to see social-democracy as a pro-bourgeois force in non-fascist countries, and particularly harmful in fascist countries. Dimitrov is saying that in both fascist and non-fascist capitalist states, social-democracy is no longer a pillar for the bourgeoisie.

Dimitrov basically admits that the analysis of social-democracy as the bulwark of the bourgeoisie was correct prior to the rise of German fascism to power. But after this, the situation supposedly changes. Why? There are three reasons given, all bogus.

Is the Labor Aristocracy Going Over to Class Struggle?

He says that the social-democratic parties are based on the labor aristocracy, which due to the economic crisis is, essentially, losing its privileges and ceasing to exist. The former privileged workers are therefore breaking off their alliance with the bourgeoisie and going over to class struggle. He says that:

"In the first place, the crisis has thoroughly shaken the position of even the most secure [section] of the working class, the so-called aristocracy of labor, upon which, as we know, Social-Democracy relies for support. This section, too, is beginning more and more to revise its views as to the expediency of the policy of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie." (Ibid.)

This is a lame argument from all directions.

There are views like this being pushed today. The CWP [Jerry Tung's now-defunct Maoist and liquidationist group] says that, because of the crisis and Reagan's cutbacks, the social basis for reformism is contracting; they claim that reformism goes away (becomes progressive) under reaction. But this is 100% wrong now (as it was in 1935). For example, one of the main things under discussion at this, our Party's Second Congress, is the activation of social-democracy under Reaganite reaction.

In addition, by 1935 the leadership of the social-democratic parties was not just based on the labor aristocracy or even the trade union bureaucracy, as Dimitrov says, but had become quite bour-

geoisified, with lots of rich petty bourgeois, present and former government officials and police chiefs, and so on. Thus, even if the labor aristocracy was going over to class struggle, this wouldn't prove that the social-democratic leadership was doing so.

But the labor aristocracy was not entirely ceasing to exist, which Dimitrov hints at and implies in his argument. In some countries it was probably being reduced somewhat, due to the crisis, but not eliminated. Dimitrov demonstrates on this point an incredibly cavalier attitude toward Leninism, one of the cardinal points of Leninism being his proof of the existence of the labor aristocracy, whose bloc with the bourgeoisie was the social basis for opportunism in the working class movement. Dimitrov's argument tends to wipe this out, surreptitiously, without serious discussion.

Furthermore, among those elements of the labor aristocracy being deprived of their privileged position, two opposite responses to this had been summed up by the CI previously: on the one hand, the tendency to go over to struggle against the bourgeoisie; on the other hand, the tendency to go into a frenzy of imperialist chauvinism in a frantic effort to regain the lost privileges. This is similar to what the Third Congress of the CI said about what the petty bourgeoisie does when it was being crushed.

Dimitrov's arguments about the labor aristocracy are an example of turning Lenin's teachings into their opposite. He transforms Lenin's teaching on the connection between opportunism and imperialist superprofits on its head, from a teaching on the necessity for struggle against opportunism into a rationale for complacency. Because of the importance of the Leninist teachings on this subject, a few more words may be in order.

Lenin, discussing the collapse of the Second International, asked for the reason of the temporary victory of opportunism. In "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism" and other articles, he noted that Marx and Engels had already pointed to the connection between the long sleep of the British working class movement for several decades in the latter nineteenth century and Britain's monopoly position at that time with respect to world markets and colonies. Lenin pointed out that the major imperialist powers had all obtained a somewhat similar situation in the twentieth century. He explained how this fostered and strengthened bourgeois labor parties, and he also pointed to the countervailing factors that ensured that the domination of opportunism would only be temporary.

But this did not mean that opportunism had been unknown to the working class movements of France, Germany, Italy, the United States and elsewhere prior to the rise of imperialism. One need only recall the long struggles of Marx and Engels their whole life long, and Lenin's use of this example against the opportunists. Need one recall the various varieties of opportunism: petty-bourgeois

socialism; Proudhon and Louis Blanc in pre-imperialist France; Lassalleism (to say nothing of liberal trade unions and religious trade unions) in pre-imperialist Germany; Bakuninist anarchism in Spain; and so forth? Hence if there really were no more superprofits in the fascist countries (what exactly was the plunder of other countries, of minorities and of the majority of the working masses other than superprofits?), it would by no means mean the automatic end of opportunism. Dimitrov, who loves to preach against overestimating the speed of revolutionization of the masses, against revolutionary phrases, and so forth, is here once again making the most fantastic estimates of automatic revolutionization.

Thus, Dimitrov's argument that social-democracy is no longer a bourgeois force because the labor aristocracy is being wiped out is an incredibly euphoric, and wrong, argument.

The Social-Democratic Workers Are Becoming Radicalized — and Hence So Are the Leaders?

Dimitrov's second argument for saying social-democracy has changed to a pro-working class force, is that the social-democratic workers are becoming radicalized. Now this conclusion from the radicalization of the rank and file is really lame. The radicalization of the social-democratic workers is, in large part, the process of them splitting with social-democracy and going over to the communist party and its independent working class program. It doesn't prove a thing, in itself, about the social-democratic leaders or social-democratic parties ceasing to be opportunist.

Dimitrov's logic is interesting. This critic of "exaggerating the revolutionization of the masses" believes that this revolutionization can even sweep the leadership of the social-democrats with it — the only thing that can't take place is for the masses to leave the social-democratic parties.

It should be noted that it is possible in some cases for social-democratic parties to turn to the left as their base does. Such things have happened, as is shown by the example of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, whose majority voted in 1920 to merge with the German Communist Party.

Nevertheless, the fact is that in the majority of the cases the social-democratic parties remain reformist despite the turn to the left of the rank-and-file. After World War I, the rank-and-file in one social-democratic party after another had been radicalized. But what happened? In the U.S., when the left-wing of the Socialist Party won the elections for national officers of the Party, the right and center used the police to throw out the left delegates and take over control of the convention. They expelled entire regions of the party. In general, in unions and parties, the social-democratic leaderships used the most dictatorial expulsions and suppression to ensure the reformist character of the

parties and unions was preserved. Even among the German Independents (who were already a split off from the official social-democrats), the leadership split the party after the vote to merge with the communists and did its best to sabotage the revolutionary stand demanded by the rank-and-file: they reconstituted a reformist Independent Social-Democratic Party and finally merged it back into the official Social-Democratic Party.

Social-Democracy is Being Persecuted

Dimitrov's final argument is that social-democracy, under fascism, loses its former position in the bourgeois state and, in fact, is being persecuted by the fascists. He points out that

"...the bourgeoisie in a number of countries is ... depriving Social-Democracy not only of its previous position in the political system of finance capital, but also, under certain conditions, of its legal status, persecuting and even suppressing it." He concludes that this compels the social-democratic leaders to take up the fight against fascism.

It is true that German fascism quickly dissolved the Social-Democratic Party and deprived it of its seats in the Reichstag (parliament), although this was not done, or done immediately, in every fascist state. As a form of political rule, fascism tends toward one-party dictatorship, toward a political monopoly which is independent of parliamentary combinations and coalitions.

But did social-democracy disapprove of this enough to take up the mass struggle against the fascist rule of the bourgeoisie? History shows that many social-democratic workers did, but the leaders were a different story. They disapproved of being deprived of their parliamentary positions and their legal party status, but they much more disapproved of waging a real fight against fascism and the finance capitalists who back it, disapproved much more of the militant working class and its revolutionary struggle for socialism. The vast bulk of the social-democratic leadership either capitulated to fascism, went passive or tried to constitute a flimsy nonrevolutionary opposition to fascism, and this was made inevitable by prior decades of fiercely loyal service to the bourgeoisie and just as fierce opposition to the revolutionary working class movement.

What about the persecution of the social-democrats by the fascists? The facts indicate that many social-democratic leaders capitulated to the persecution and sought to save their positions by adopting open fascist ideology and politics. And a section of German social-democratic leaders did just that and joined the nazis. To highlight this, listen to Leipart, the head of the reformist trade unions of Germany. He wrote, just prior to the dissolution of the social-democratic trade unions (called the "free trade unions"), begging Hitler:

"The social tasks facing the trade unions

must be carried out, no matter what the government regime may be ... they are prepared to collaborate with the employer's organizations ... recognize government control ... They offer help to the government and parliament [i.e. the Hitler-controlled Reichstag] with their knowledge and experience."

And listen to Wels, leader of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, speaking in the Reichstag, just before the SDP was dissolved:

"The social-democrats are those who helped to promote Hitler to his present position. ... The social-democrats fully subscribe to the program of foreign policy outlined by Hitler in his declarations."

Another section of social-democratic leaders was forced into the underground, or into exile, but what it did there was to carry on as before, undermining the anti-fascist struggle. After all, there was heavy persecution of the radicalized social-democratic workers, and some social-democratic leaders had to posture against fascism to prevent them from going over to the Communist Party. Thus, neither the persecution nor prohibition of the SDP resulted in it changing its class political character from bourgeois to working class.

And given the importance that Dimitrov gave to the example of France, it may be useful to see what happened to the French social-democrats and Radicals. After its fall to the nazis in World War II, France was divided into one area directly administered by the German nazis and another region administered by a puppet regime whose capital was Vichy. Numerous prominent social-democrats and Radicals participated in the nazi puppet Vichy regime. The French social-democratic party, the SFIO, fell apart with the fall of France to the nazis. The majority of its parliamentarians voted on 10 July 1940 to give dictatorial powers to Marshal Petain, as he labored to set up the pro-nazi Vichy regime, and prominent leaders accepted positions in the Vichy government, including Paul Faure, who had been Secretary of the SFIO, Spinasse, who had been minister of commerce in Blum's Popular Front government, and the trade union leader Rene Belin.

True, the SFIO -- like other parties and trade unions -- was suppressed and various leaders were arrested; but, Dimitrov to the contrary, this did not eliminate the treachery of social-democracy. The SFIO went to pieces, some leaders going over to fascism while another section of leaders eventually began to reorganize the SFIO under another name and resist fascism, albeit in the reformist manner hand in hand with the French and Allied bourgeoisie and as an anti-communist buffer to prevent revolution.

And this type of treachery was not unique to the German and French social-democrats. One can recall the Conciliation Pact, of the Italian social-democratic leadership with Mussolini, or the filthy collaborationist activity of the Albanian bourgeois nationalists (such as the Balli Kombetar) in Albania during first Italian and then German occupation in

World War II.

Of course, the stand of the social-democratic party leadership is one thing, and the stand of the rank-and-file worker is another. Because the social-democratic workers were more and more interested in fighting fascism, the issue was raised sharply of the communist parties dealing with the maneuvers of the reformist leadership and with various dissident local social-democratic organizations. But utilizing united front tactics and perhaps making various concessions to those workers truly moving to the standpoint of class struggle would be for the purpose of winning the workers away from social-democratic reformism and the leaders who upheld this reformism, not to prettify social-democracy as a born-again pro-working class force.

Dimitrov implies that the social-democrats in the non-fascist countries saw the fate of German social-democracy under Hitlerite fascism and that this woke them up to the persecution, suppression, etc. that they would suffer under fascism. In this way these social-democrats are supposedly compelled to become genuine fighters against fascism.

While the social-democrats in Europe and America may have shouted against Hitler and politely criticized German social-democracy's capitulation, this wasn't because they had decided to become fierce anti-fascist fighters. No, this was a pose to escape being tainted with the crimes of German social-democracy (and because they were servants of their own bourgeoisie, which had contradictions with the German bourgeoisie). In fact, Germany was the classical country of social-democracy and the German SDP was the acknowledged leader of the Second International. In general the social-democratic parties i) had their leaderships based in the same social strata as the SDP of Germany; ii) had been in alliance with their own bourgeoisie for decades; iii) had fought communism tooth and nail for years; iv) had the same ideology and tactics; and v) therefore were just as incapable of developing a serious struggle against the fascists.

Under the somewhat changed conditions of the mid-30's, social-democracy not only remained a staunch bulwark of bourgeois rule, but, specifically, it remained a force that acted to deliver the working class into the clutches of fascist terror and repression.

With Dimitrov's new line that social-democracy was now a friend of the working class, the line to struggle against social-democracy was, for all intents and purposes, wiped out. Oh sure, there were a few orthodox statements inserted about the need for a fight against social-democracy, but this was basically just eyewash. Essentially, opportunism was now regarded as being, at the very least, a middle force to be united with.

B) Covering up the Treachery of Social-Democracy

But to characterize social-democracy in this way runs into a roadblock. It had just proven its pro-

capitalist role in a most striking way in its complete betrayal of the working class to fascism in Germany, Austria, and elsewhere. **Dimitrov sidesteps this problem by covering up the depth of this betrayal and by saying that it would never have occurred if the working class would have forced the social-democratic leaders to fight fascism.**

Thus, he shifts the criticism from the social-democrats to the working class, not forgetting to also tar the communist parties (especially the German CP) with some of the responsibility for the social-democratic betrayal. He does this by exaggerating the mistakes of the communist parties and suggesting that, if it hadn't been for this, the social-democratic leaders would have fought.

Paraphrasing Dimitrov, he says "If only the workers had put more pressure on the social-democratic leaders, if only the Communist Party hadn't been so sectarian.... Then the social-democratic leaders would have woken up, as they are doing so today, once they had a chance to see the disastrous consequence to even themselves in the policy of not sternly fighting the fascists." (See the section in Dimitrov's speech entitled "Is the Victory of Fascism Inevitable?") So, in other words, the social-democrats had betrayed because they were confused, not because their political heart and soul was in holy wedlock with capitalism.

Instead of ramming the experience of social-democratic capitulation to fascism down the throats of international social-democracy, heightening the crisis of the Second International, and winning the majority of the working class for struggle and communism, Dimitrov lets social-democracy off the hook. He then goes on to say that, in the future, the social-democrats may turn out to be glorious anti-fascist fighters; we'll have to wait and see.

Actually Dimitrov's speech is notable for how much he doesn't say about social-democratic treachery. There is not a word about the fascization of the state carried out by the social-democratic coalition governments; about the social-democratic police chiefs such as Zorgeibal, who had 33 revolutionary workers shot down in the streets in Berlin in the communist May Day demonstration of 1929; about the social-democratic government of Prussia not just refusing to suppress the nazi stormtroopers, but actually protecting them while attacking the Communist Party and prohibiting the Red Front Fighters League; and not a word about the leaders of the SDP of Germany who meekly incorporated themselves into the nazi dictatorship.

In all these ways the pro-capitalist, pro-fascist role of social-democracy is obscured and covered up.

C) Denying the Existence of the "Left" Phrasemongering Wing of Social-Democracy

Also serving to tone down the struggle against social-democracy are Dimitrov's views which essentially deny the existence of the "left" phrasemongering wing of social-democracy. Dimitrov recog-

nizes just two camps in *social-democracy*, not three: a reactionary section and a genuine Left section becoming radicalized. "Left" social-democracy disappears from Dimitrov's Report. He doesn't recognize the danger of that trend of "left" phrasemongering social-democratic leaders whose role is to prevent the workers from splitting from social-democratic reformism by sounding left and holding out the promise of militant, revolutionary actions in the future by social-democracy, while continuing to oppose communism and the path of struggle.

Here's an example:

"On the other hand, we emphasize the necessity of seeing **the difference between the two different camps of Social-Democracy.** As I have already pointed out, there is a reactionary camp of Social-Democracy, but alongside of it there exists and is growing the camp of the Left Social-Democrats (without quotation marks), of workers who are becoming revolutionary." (See the passage on the "second series of errors," in the section "The Government of the United Front," emphasis as in the original.)

(And other statements make it clear Dimitrov regards the Left section as including not just the social-democratic rank-and-file, but also leaders, indeed it is supposed to be the dominant aspect of the social-democratic parties as a whole.)

There are at least three such authoritative statements in his speeches at the Seventh Congress. Dimitrov does not fail, however, to insert a seemingly orthodox loophole: "... we shall struggle resolutely against all 'Left' demagogues'..." (See the end of Section III "Consolidation of the Communist Parties and the Struggle for the Political Unity of the Proletariat".)

At the Sixth Congress of the CI, "left" social-democracy was said to be "the most dangerous instrument in the hands of the reformists for deceiving the revolutionary masses." In our article of June '82 on the West European anti-war movement, we quoted Stalin saying that:

"In order that the fight against social-democracy may be waged successfully, stress must be laid on the fight against the so-called 'Left' wing of social-democracy, that 'Left' wing which, by playing with 'Left' phrases and thus adroitly deceiving the workers, is retarding their mass defection from Social-Democracy. It is obvious that unless the 'Left' Social-Democrats are routed it will be impossible to overcome Social-Democracy in general." ("The Right Deviation in the C.P.S.U.(B.)," Works, Vol. 12, p. 23)

Dimitrov casually throws the previous assessments by the CI of "left" social-democracy on the junkpile. So, in effect, the communist parties are to buddy up to and unite with the "left" phrasemongers who represent the last barrier social-democracy throws up to prevent the radicalized rank-and-file social-democratic workers from moving to **revolution-**

ary positions.

More than this. Dimitrov states that the CI no longer wants to fight social-democracy and wipe out its influence on the working class, but instead to prop up the official social-democratic parties, left or not. On the pretext of opposing centrist schemes of creating new anti-communist parties in between the communists and the socialists, Dimitrov defends the organizational unity of the official reformist parties. This is how Dimitrov turns the criticism of "left" social-democracy on its head! Listen to this:

"... But precisely because we are for unity, we shall struggle resolutely against all 'Left' demagogues who will try to make use of the disillusionment of the Social-Democratic workers to create new Socialist Parties or Internationals directed against the Communist movement, and thus keep deepening the split in the working class." (At the end of section III)

Let's consider the meaning of this. International social-democracy is reeling in severe crisis, as mentioned earlier. Some elements of the social-democratic parties are even giving speeches saying Lenin was right in his dispute with Kautsky, the ideological leader of social-democracy. Under the pressure of the genuinely left-wing social-democratic workers who were becoming revolutionized, a section of social-democratic leaders is compelled to split from the official social-democratic parties and take up revolutionary positions in words. They hoped to consolidate these splits short of the radicalized workers joining the communist party. And then later they could lead these workers back into the social-democratic party when the situation calmed down.

This had been the role of the 2 1/2 International in the early '20s. Another good example of this was, in 1933, the role of the Independent Labor Party (ILP) of Britain. It withdrew from the Labor Party and the Second International due to pressure from the rank-and-file membership. It passed a resolution to approach the CI for joint work, and it was in united front actions with the CP of Great Britain. Clearly such splits, as those of the ILP from the Labor Party, are inevitable in a period when the workers are becoming radicalized and need to be encouraged further, which the CI did do in the Sixth Congress period.

But there were two camps in the ILP: first, the radicalized workers, and second, the "left" demagogues in the leadership who proved time and again that they wanted to sabotage the motion to the left. Dimitrov does not oppose the "left" demagogues and support the real movement to the left. No, he opposed the "left" demagogues and calls for a movement to the **right**, back into the social-democratic parties. He opposes the "left" social-democrats for splitting with the right social-democrats at all.

It may also be useful at this point to recall once again the example of the Independent Social-

Democratic Party of Germany which developed as the workers rejected the chauvinism of the official social-democrats in World War I.

The "Independents" had split from the official, overtly reformist Social-Democratic Party of Germany. (Fortunately, Dimitrov had not yet told them that it was wrong to do so.) As the masses of workers became radicalized, in December 1920 the CP of Germany and the left-wing of the Independents merged into the "United Communist Party of Germany". This was of tremendous importance to the German working class movement, dramatically increased the size and influence of the CP of Germany, and did much to transform German politics.

But even this example, apparently the one most suitable to Dimitrov's view on the radicalization of the social-democratic parties, refutes Dimitrov every step of the way. To begin with, this merger was only possible because the Independents had previously split from the SDP; and Dimitrov denounces such splits. And merger with the communists was prepared by constant pressure against the centrist leaders among the "Independents"; this was a complex process including even arguing with them at the Second CI Congress.

Furthermore, as we have pointed out above, when the majority of the Independents voted for merger with communism, the diehard centrist leaders did not become radicalized but did their best to keep as many workers as possible from communism; they reformed the Independents and eventually merged back to the social-chauvinist SDP.

The point here is, of course, not that every centrist leader is inevitably bound to remain a centrist all his life, but that the centrist and "left" phrasemongering trend does not go away but must be fought. This struggle is precisely needed in order to take account of the radicalization of the social-democratic rank-and-file and help them pass over to revolutionary stands and communism.

Thus it is pretty clear that Dimitrov wasn't just advising the parties to pay close attention to the radicalization of the social-democratic rank-and-file. On the contrary, he is floating a definite line not to win the working masses away from social-democracy, but to abandon this struggle. His perspective is to reinforce the social-democratic parties and allegedly "unify" the workers, not by destroying the influence of reformism, but by simply working with the reformists and, as the highest goal, merging with them into a single party.

D) Organizational Merger with the Social-Democratic Parties

This whole line of merger with the social-democratic parties is elaborated in the section "Political Unity of the Working Class". And why not merge organizationally with the social-democrats? Dimitrov has already defined them as a working class force. So, he says, this dual leadership of the workers by the communist parties and the social-

democratic parties is harmful, and we should form a single party, and the communist parties should take the initiative in the struggle for unification.

Inasmuch as this marks a complete 180 degree turnabout in the line of the CI, there was bound to be consternation and worry over such a "new tactic". And so the Seventh Congress presents all this euphoria about how great social-democracy has become and so on and so forth. Dimitrov says that the working class movement on a world scale "is entering the period of closing the split in its ranks." In the opening speech to the Seventh Congress, Wilhelm Pieck says,

"The era of the Second International in the ranks of the working class movement is over. The situation in the capitalist countries, the position of world capitalism, which is unable to find a way out of its difficulties or to alleviate the want and hunger of the masses, shows that a new rise, a new blossoming of reformism is already impossible."

This is Alfred E. Neumann-style "What, Me Worry?" politics.

Dimitrov gives five conditions that would have to be met before unification of a communist party and a social-democratic party could be carried out. Someone might ask: What happened to the basic ideas in Lenin's 21 "Terms of Admission to the CI"? Dimitrov doesn't say. The five conditions given are OK as far as they go, but insufficient. On top of this, the Seventh Congress gave the line of abandoning these conditions for the communist parties themselves. How could Dimitrov seriously be insisting on the rupture of the social-democratic bloc with the bourgeoisie, as one of his conditions for unification of the communist and social-democratic parties claims, when he was telling the communist parties to form a bloc with the bourgeois liberals?

Even if you're trying to be cautious in assessing this, it is hard not to see a turn in the direction of liquidationism. And indeed, in discussing the possibilities of trade union unity, Dimitrov says:

"... We are even prepared to forego the idea of creating Communist fractions in the trade unions if that is necessary to promote trade union unity." (Near the end of Section V)

Thus, liquidating party organization to achieve the united front is said to be a permissible concession. Perhaps, under certain unusual conditions, one might have to make even such a harsh concession as this, provided one had a way to accomplish the purpose of the trade union fractions in another way, but the point is that Dimitrov sees nothing particularly harsh in this concession nor is he concerned with repairing the damage such a concession was making to the structure and activities of the Communist Party of France, which made this concession. Instead, Dimitrov is bartering with social-democracy. He is selling off the communist organization piece by piece. He is not content to just raise the possibility of concessions in general. No, for starters, he glibly gives up a key type of party

organization, and on a world scale. The social-democratic leaders could only reply to such gifts: "And what else?"

Now, not every merger of a communist party with a social-democratic party is liquidationism. This is clear from the example we have used several times of the merger of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany with the CP of Germany. But Dimitrov, as his carefree liquidation of trade union fractions shows, is not talking about transforming organizations of radical workers into communist organizations but in transforming the communist parties to suit social-democracy. There was no way that there was any prospect of global merger of the social-democratic parties with communist parties on a correct basis at that time. Dimitrov's plan of merger, his abandonment of the perspective of winning the masses to communism, his concept of how to end the split in the working class movement, were all on the liquidationist pattern.

Thus it appears that Browder's liquidation of the Communist Party of the USA's fractions in the trade unions was not an individual deviation, unrelated to anything going on in the CI at that time. Perhaps, too, the dissolution of the CPUSA in 1944 did not appear so outrageous and did not meet much immediate opposition among party members because of the ideological atmosphere that was step by step created on the basis of the line begun at the Seventh CI Congress.

The CI ardently pursued the plan for merger with social-democracy after the Seventh Congress. The period of flirtation that ensued was broken off later in the 1930's when the social-democratic leaders seized the occasion of the trials of the trotskyites and bukharinites in Moscow to launch a wave of anti-communist hysteria.

Only a few mergers between communist parties and social-democratic parties were achieved. There was merger with the Socialist Party of Catalonia (which had been an autonomous branch in Catalonia of the Spanish social-democratic party, the PSOE), with the social-democrats in the Philippines and Iceland, in some places in Latin America, and in some other places there were mergers simply between the communist and social-democratic youth organizations and not the parties. There was never any overall CI or Cominform summation of the result of these mergers of the 1930s. And no wonder. Although it is quite possible that the results in different countries varied, and certainly each has to be investigated in its own right, it is clear that the Seventh Congress' euphoric picture of worldwide merger proved absurd.

Furthermore, the Seventh Congress line on merger with social-democracy was continued in the post-World War II period. After World War II, there was a series of mergers of communist and social-democratic parties in Eastern Europe. Comrade Enver Hoxha complains in various places that the communists did not do sufficient ideological, political or organizational work after the mergers, but he never seri-

ously discusses the experience of the mergers or the general line that led to them and guided them. (For example, see the paragraph in the middle of Ch. 9 of his book The Khrushchovites that begins "As in Hungary, East Germany, Rumania and elsewhere, the Polish party was formed through a mechanical merger of the existing party with the bourgeois parties, so-called workers' parties. ..." -- page 86 of the Proletarian Internationalism edition.)

5. Wrong Views on United Front Tactics

There were the wrong views put forward on the tactics of the united front. There are several issues here.

As was said previously, what was "new" about the line of the Seventh Congress was not the united front itself, nor even the united front against fascism. The resolution on Dimitrov's speech, however, calls for the application of

"the united front tactics in a new manner, by seeking to reach agreements with the organizations of the toilers of various political trends for joint action..."

Presumably what is supposed to be new is agreements with "the organizations" themselves, that is, agreements from above. But again, the united front from above, united front agreements with the various levels of the social-democratic parties and reformist trade unions, also was not something new. The CI had been talking about this tactic since the Third Congress.

But in fact what is new in the Seventh Congress is indeed the wider application of the united front from above. Indeed, the whole idea of the Seventh Congress is that such agreements from above, with the national leadership of the social-democratic (and liberal) parties, must be achieved at all costs. Only such agreements from above, or work with the immediate object of obtaining such agreements, could now be regarded as united front work.

Previously the stress was on the united front from below, on the work among the rank-and-file workers. It was considered impermissible to pursue united agreements with the opportunist leaders without simultaneously pursuing the united front from below, the work among the masses. And the success of united front tactics was to be judged by their effect at the base.

But now everything is concentrated on concessions and deals at the top. In fact, there is hardly any mention of the united front from below. The united front from below is essentially discarded. When the term "united front" is used in the Report, it is used to mean united front agreements with the opportunist leaders. Work at the base, or any type of work, is to be evaluated on the basis of what effect it has on the process of seeking an accommodation with the social-democratic party leaderships.

Previously, it was seen that, in most cases, it was possible to achieve united front agreements with the opportunist parties only if these parties were

under heavy pressure due to the work from "below". And, of course, it was expected that the social-democratic party leaderships would seek to sabotage the implementation of any such agreements. Many examples bear out the correctness of these perspectives.

But now, with Dimitrov, it is implied that the social-democratic leaders as a whole are willing to come to an agreement about mass struggle because of their own good will, because they are moving to the stand of the class struggle. And there is certainly no mention of their goal of seeking to weaken and destroy the communist parties. This of course corresponds to the overall prettification of social-democracy at the Seventh Congress. Perhaps it was considered impolite, if not downright sectarian, to split the workers away from reformism with the united front from below.

Previously, the united front was seen as a tactic to be applied to invigorate the mass struggle in defense of the immediate interests of the masses. Election campaigns were not particularly stressed, but were treated in their relationship to the work as a whole.

Now, to be sure, Dimitrov talks a lot about the united front in the day-to-day struggle, but in practice the main attention of the communist parties seems to have become focused on election agreements. And the election campaigns were not treated in a communist way, but as an occasion to feed the working class on paper declarations and high-sounding formulas that unite the communists and social-democrats but mean nothing in terms of actual struggle. The social-democratic misleaders can sign their name to all sorts of bombastic, high-sounding vague statements. If the crucible of actual deeds -- especially the mass struggle and also what the social-democrats actually did in parliament and elsewhere -- is left out, there is no way to expose the social-democrats' hypocrisy by their actual practice.

A good example of the results of relying on electoral struggle against fascism was the 1938 Austrian plebiscite.

Austria was then ruled by non-nazi fascists, who were opposed to union (which was known as "Anschluss") with Germany. The National Socialist (Nazi) Party had been outlawed in Austria around the time of the assassination of the dictator Dollfuss by nazis in 1934. Now, in 1938, Hitler was presenting ultimatums to the Austrian government. To prevent a nazi takeover and annexation of Austria by Germany, the regime of Dollfuss's successor, Kurt Schuschnigg scheduled a plebiscite on the issue. The Social-Democratic Party of Austria, also illegal, was allowed to come out in the open for a few days to campaign against union with Germany.

Now the great wonderworking powers of the electoral united front with social-democracy could be seen in practice. The vote would certainly be against Anschluss. The communists, social-democrats and even home-grown fascists (followers of Schuschnigg)

nigg) would all vote against the nazis.

The trouble was that Hitler knew this too, and so he invaded Austria. Hitler devoured Austria, and the plebiscite wasn't held. Once again, electoral cretinism was shown to be an illusion built on smoke. The communist parties had to fight on the electoral front, but at the same time it was an illusion to believe that anything but the fierce class confrontation would decide the clash between fascism and revolution.

Previously the united front against fascism implied the simultaneous struggle to expose the social-democratic leaders and their unwillingness to lift a finger against fascism. The method and tone of this exposure may change in accordance with the united front tactics, but the content of this exposure had to be maintained. Now, what occurs in general is the prettification of the social-democratic leaders who, aside from a few bad eggs, are pictured as staunch anti-fascists, on the basis of their paper declarations.

Previously the united front was a tactic to unite the working class in the course of mass struggle. It was to unify the working class by destroying the influence of reformism and social-democracy among the workers. Now, the united front against fascism is turned into a tactic to supposedly unify the working class by liquidating the communist opposition to social-democratic treachery and reformism.

[The speech proceeded to make some brief remarks about the questions of united front government and people's front government which are raised in Dimitrov's report and which are important for the subsequent developments in France and Spain and also those that took place later after World War II. But this question was basically outside the scope of the speech, and we omit these remarks because of their preliminary nature.

However, a short comment should be made about Spain. The experience of the popular front in Spain is more complicated than in France, because in Spain the communists stood at the heart of a heroic armed struggle against Franco's troops. Unlike France, where the talk of struggle against fascism degenerated into mere words, here the Communist Party stood on the front lines of the anti-fascist war.

Nevertheless, the line of the Seventh Congress still exercised a negative effect. The Communist Party of Spain rallied about the banner of defense of the bourgeois Republic (i.e. refused to do anything that went outside the bounds of a bourgeois republic) and opposed giving the anti-fascist war revolutionary features in order not to scare the liberal bourgeois Republicans. The irony of the situation was that the Republicans in Spain, like the Radicals in France, were utter capitulators to reaction, and the CP had to devote time to preventing the Republicans in the government from exposing themselves in front of the masses for, among other things, their defeatism.

Thus in Spain, as in France, the line that anti-fascist struggle requires subordinating the movement

to what is acceptable to the liberal bourgeoisie was proven wrong in practice. Far from strengthening the struggle, this restriction weakened it.

The Spanish Civil War deserves a treatment in some detail, both because of the valuable experience of the massive revolutionary upsurge of the Spanish communists and working masses and because the memory of the heroism of the anti-fascist fighters has been used to give a false luster to the line of the Seventh Congress. We will be examining the Spanish Civil War in the future.--ed.]

Wrong Views on the Question of War and Peace

There are the wrong views put forward on the question of war in peace in Dimitrov's Closing Speech to the Seventh Congress. The basic point is that Dimitrov throws out revolutionary work and the revolutionary Leninist principles and tactics under a number of pretexts and advances pacifist views in their place. As usual, this is all done in the midst of demagoguery galore.

In his Closing Speech, Dimitrov says:

"Ours is a Congress of struggle for the preservation of peace, against the threat of imperialist war." And he says, "We are now raising the issue of this struggle in a new way." (Emphasis as in the original)

And what, according to Dimitrov, is the old way which is being replaced? The old way is supposedly "the fatalistic outlook on the question of imperialist war emanating from old Social-Democratic notions." Nobody likes fatalism, but what is he talking about?

"It is true that imperialist wars are the product of capitalism, that only the overthrow of capitalism will put an end to all war; but it is likewise true that the toiling masses can obstruct imperialist war by their militant action." But of course Dimitrov didn't just mean "obstructing" war. Ercoli, explaining the new line at the Seventh Congress, stated that with the new orientation of the CI "it is even possible to prevent the outbreak of a new imperialist war." (Ercoli's reply to the discussion on his report on "The Preparations for Imperialist War and the Tasks of the CI" Abridged Stenographic Proceedings, p. 496)

Now, practically speaking, this assessment is ridiculous. The former views of the CI were not fatalist, while in the situation facing the Seventh Congress it was absurd to give anyone the impression that gigantic clashes weren't in the making.

World War II was already drawing near, Soviet diplomacy and the sessions of the Seventh Congress themselves showed that everyone knew that this was so, and nothing short of proletarian revolutions in key European countries could prevent this, and nothing but the development of the revolutionary movement could affect these coming clashes. Unless there was reason to believe that the proletarian

revolution was imminent before the war, war there would be -- and war there already was in China (Japanese invasion). The aggressive events leading to the outbreak of World War II were under way by the time of the Seventh Congress. The fascists did not use much of a disguise to hide their desire for expansionist war. It was quite clear that a huge world clash was impending.

Thus the question facing the Seventh Congress was to provide orientation to deal with this situation.

Instead, the world movement is told -- hey, if we really get going now, we can avoid these clashes! All we have to do is abandon revolution and unite the people on pacifist appeals. Why, hadn't the "peace ballot" in Britain "mobilized eleven million people," Ercoli told the Seventh Congress in his Reply to the Discussion of his report on imperialist war? So what if the "peace ballot," organized by the pacifists and "the Friends of the League of Nations", had nothing to do with revolution, didn't signify at all that these 11 million people would rise up in struggle, and only signified that the people longed for peace. (See the Abridged Stenographic Report of the Seventh Congress, pp. 496-7. The pacifist nature of the peace ballot is described by Ercoli himself in his Report, see p. 433.)

Indeed the opportunist views in Dimitrov's speech are elaborated in depth in Ercoli's speech to the Seventh Congress entitled "The Preparations for Imperialist War and the Tasks of the CI," and in the Resolution on this speech. Ercoli was the name used by Togliatti, who later became well known as a founding father of Euro-revisionism. In his speech it is stated straightout that

"the struggle for peace becomes our central slogan in the fight against war."

There is the call for the "united front of all who want to defend and preserve peace." (He was referring to all who were willing to give the peace slogan, not those who actually built the revolutionary movement against the imperialists.) There are numerous calls to "fight together for peace," "fight to maintain peace," and lots more peace-peace-peace chatter. And it is stated that, rather than fatalism, why,

"our struggle for peace ... has every chance of being successful," i.e., in preventing war, without revolution. (Abridged Stenographic Proceedings, p. 415)

Nowhere does Dimitrov or Ercoli do anything but throw cold water on the basic Leninist view that one must combat the danger of war by building a revolutionary movement for the overthrow of capitalism. Lenin stressed that the struggle for peace without revolutionary struggle is a hollow and false phrase, and that the revolutionary struggle for socialism is the only way to put an end to the horror of war. The Seventh Congress documents are chock full of just such hollow and false phrasemongering for peace as Lenin denounced.

The trouble with Dimitrov's passage calling for new views is that there is absolutely no fatalism

(much less social-democratic fatalism) in any of the former, Leninist views of the CI on war. Dimitrov is creating bad feelings about the Marxist-Leninist thesis that war is inherent in capitalism and that to eliminate war one must organize the revolution to overthrow capitalism; his aim is to justify pacifist and liberal methods of agitation on the question of war.

And just to make sure you don't miss the point that the old Leninist views no longer apply, Dimitrov goes on to say

"Today the world is not what it was in 1914."

His point is that whereas when Lenin was alive during World War I, the only way to deal with capitalist war was to build the revolutionary movement, now the socialist forces are so strong that we can allegedly preserve peace and prevent war without the revolution by simply yelling for peace. Most of Dimitrov's comments on the question of war and peace are dedicated to backing up this idea that now Leninism is supposedly outdated.

How was the world of 1935 different from 1914, according to Dimitrov?

a) In 1935, the Soviet army existed. This is true, but could this prevent a war between, say, Germany and France? Did it prevent Japan from invading Manchuria prior to the Seventh Congress? Did it even eliminate the fascist plans to invade the Soviet Union? It is absurd to say the Soviet Army's existence could civilize imperialism, especially at a time when that imperialism was planning a trial of strength with the Soviet Army.

b) In 1935, the working class had its communist parties, whereas in 1914 there was only social-democracy. But to deny the existence of the revolutionary working class movement in 1914 is absurd. It is even more absurd when the plan for 1935 is alliance with those same social-democratic leaders and trends which paralyzed most of the organized working class in 1914.

c) In 1935 the oppressed peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial countries did not regard their liberation as a hopeless cause, whereas before 1914 they did. Someone forgot to tell Sun Yat Sen about this in 1914.

d) In 1935 the people hate war more -- whereas in 1914 the people supposedly loved war?

e) In 1935 a number of big capitalist countries allegedly didn't want war, because they were afraid of losing out in a new redivision of the world. But the process of the non-fascist imperialist states appeasing Germany and encouraging Hitler's militarism and directing it toward the USSR was well under way. This cannot be described as "not wanting war."

Thus there was absolutely no ground for throwing aside the Leninist views under the plea that "the conditions have changed."

In his speech, Ercoli says that the Resolution of the Sixth Congress of the CI against imperialist war is still in force, but is just being added to. This is a fraud. The Sixth Congress upheld the Leninist

teachings, while the Seventh Congress was preaching about the need to abandon these allegedly outdated views. For example, the Sixth Congress stresses the fight against all shades of bourgeois pacifism. But there is hardly a word about combating pacifism in the Seventh Congress. Ercoli in fact gives all sorts of views in favor of the bourgeois pacifist organizations and agitations. He calls for the communists to integrate with the pacifists' organizations and "fight for the Leninist line" there. But this "Leninist line" has been degraded to philistine petty-bourgeois peacemongering. Thus the line is for merger with pacifism. And, of course, it is a way of finding a common ground with bourgeois liberalism, although Ercoli discreetly declines to mention this.

For us to follow such a line today would entail, for example, accommodation with the nuclear freeze campaign. And of course, this is what the revisionist liquidators are all doing in one way or another.

And the connection is unmistakable between this line and the line given in the post-World War II period on the peace movement; with the activities of the World Peace Congress; and with the line Stalin gives in "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR".

The Seventh Congress may be distinguished from the post-World War II period on this question by its more orthodox trappings. Ercoli, for example, stresses many times that if the struggle to preserve peace is not successful and war should break out, then we must "transform the imperialist war into a civil war." But this doesn't mean anything. Klon-sky [Maoist "three worlder"], while in a bear hug with the Pentagon generals in his "main blow at the USSR" period, also yelled that he was for "transforming the imperialist war into a civil war." The Second International proclaimed essentially the same thing just prior to World War I in the Basle Resolution, that is, just prior to their betrayal to the line of "defend the fatherland." What this shows is that the proclamation of one's intent to "turn the imperialist war into a civil war" is just hypocrisy if the line one pursues prior to the outbreak of war is nonrevolutionary. Only by pursuing all-sided revolutionary work and a revolutionary line in the period before the war breaks out can there be the possibility of a political organization or trend following a consistent revolutionary line after the war breaks out. Chatter about peace, combined with proclamations of the great revolutionary deeds one will perform in the future, as at the Seventh Congress, is just such hypocrisy.

(The communist parties fought, and fought heroically, during World War II, leading anti-fascist resistance struggles and wars in Europe and Asia. However, the wrong orientation from the Seventh Congress must have been one of the sources leading to mistaken estimates of the role of the U.S., Britain, etc. The mistaken and nonrevolutionary orientations that were being spread in the world communist movement before the war didn't vanish

magically, but came up in somewhat different forms.)

The issue of how the question of war and peace was presented at the Seventh CI Congress is a big subject, involving a series of other incorrect views, besides those already mentioned. For example, the presentation of the world situation, and of the possible characteristics of the big war that was coming, was non-systematic and eclectic. And this is tied to a series of other problems. But these issues will have to be taken up at a later time.

7. Wrong Views on the Liberation Struggle of the Oppressed Nations

There are the wrong views advanced on the question of the liberation struggle of the oppressed nations. As Dimitrov did not pursue a revolutionary line for the developed capitalist countries, he could hardly be expected to call for revolution in the oppressed nations. In fact, here too the line was watered down.

It is notable, for example, that the conditions Dimitrov advanced for the amalgamation of the communist parties with the social-democratic parties did not include the necessity for carrying out a fight against the national and colonial oppression by one's "own" bourgeoisie of subject nations. It appears that this was not just an oversight or meant to be included in the vague phrases of other conditions; it seems that after the Seventh Congress, in practice, the Communist Parties of France and Spain, for example, sacrificed this struggle to the pursuit of alliances with the social-democrats and liberals. The French CP did not fight for the liberation of Indochina and Algeria, only for mild reforms, while the Spanish CP gave up the fight for the liberation of Spanish Morocco.

And secondly, in the little that is said at the Seventh Congress, Dimitrov presents a one-sided view of the attitude to be taken toward the national-reformist bourgeoisie.

First, let us recall the stand of the Sixth CI Congress, which characterized the national-reformist movement "as an opportunist movement, subject to great vacillations; balancing between imperialism and revolution." It called for struggle against this national-reformist trend. And the Sixth Congress Resolution warns of the treachery of the national-reformist current in the anti-imperialist movement. The national-reformist current has some contradictions with imperialism, unlike the compradore, pro-imperialist section of the domestic bourgeoisie. But the national reformists' opposition to imperialism is inconsistent. They find their position much more threatened by the rise of the peasant agrarian movement and the working-class movement than by imperialist oppression. This results in the national bourgeoisie deserting the anti-imperialist struggle as the workers' and peasants' struggles gain in strength.

However, at the Seventh Congress, in discussing India for example, what is stressed is that the

Communist Party should participate in the mass activities and organizations of the Indian National Congress (which is the organization of the reformist Indian bourgeoisie, and not a parliament). There is no mention of the need for struggle against these national reformists, nor is there any warning about their treachery, whether their past treachery or what could be expected in the future. These views are not unlike the new, opportunist views of the Seventh Congress on social-democracy. They lead to the subordination of the revolution to the domestic bourgeoisie and to merger with this political current.

In practice, after the Seventh Congress, the CI became enthusiastic about the Indian National Congress. Although the Indian National Congress continued its path of treachery and betrayal, the line was still to support it. This is one of the roots of the line after World War II of worshipping Gandhi and Nehru.

Today the revisionists reject the revolution and place their hopes on the reformists such as Allende of Chile and the national reformists such as Sukarno of Indonesia. They also go further than this and paint ordinary liberal bourgeois forces, who have no quarrel with imperialism, such as Aquino of the Philippines, in anti-imperialist colors. In fact, they may even do this with fascists, such as the Shah of Iran, as we all know.

The flabby attitude to the national-reformist bourgeoisie advanced by the Seventh Congress may be an ancestor, may have played some role, in fertilizing views which later gave rise to various three worldist type theories.

8. And Other Issues

Finally, the comments on the above five subjects aren't comprehensive. And there are also problems with other subjects taken up in Dimitrov's Report. For example, on the question of party building -- in so far as the issue is even discussed -- most of what is said is just a diatribe against "left" sectarianism and doctrinairism; it is in service to the profoundly right opportunist, liberal-labor errors being advanced in the rest of the report.

And there are many other problems as well, such as the presentation of the histories of the Commun-

ist Parties; the tactics for the US, for Britain, for France, for Germany; the line on trade union neutrality; the question of the way in which the discussions leading to the new line were held, etc.

Some Points in Conclusion

Comrades who have been reading the Seventh Congress materials, or who will be doing so soon, may have some difficulty isolating a number of the problems there. This is because of the large amount of demagogical methods used by Dimitrov to disguise the departures from Leninism. In fact, this deception is one of the reasons our Party has only recently become aware of the seriousness of the problems at the Congress. Helping to cut through this camouflage has been, in particular, the Party's study of the history of the line of the CI on united front tactics, the history of the activities of the individual parties of the CI, as well as the study of the post-World War II period of the international communist movement. Without this study, it might be very difficult to see through the pseudo-orthodoxy of Dimitrov's Report.

Our Party is a fighter against fascism. The view that has been expressed here is that the opportunist deviations of the Seventh Congress weaken the anti-fascist struggle. These views have nothing to do with the opportunists' criticisms of the Seventh Congress. One opportunist position is to denounce the fight against fascism as something that is necessarily opportunist; something that necessarily means alliance with the "good" bourgeoisie against the fascists; i.e., necessarily means reformist, liberal-labor politics. This is nonsense, as this talk attempted to clarify.

Furthermore, the wrong orientation at the Seventh Congress has a bearing on all sorts of trends in the international communist movement since 1935: Maoism, Browderism, Titoism, the birth of Euro-revisionism, and so on. It bears on the development of the revolutionary movement in numerous countries and on the overall line of the international communist movement. Our Party will take up these issues step by step over time. What we are doing here is to begin the examination of the new and wrong orientations of the Seventh Congress. <>

=====