

FACTS AND FICTIONS ON C. P. CONVENTION

By **ALAN MAX**

SOME INACCURATE accounts of the recent national convention of the Communist Party are appearing in Marxist publications abroad. These publications have nothing but the most fraternal attitude toward American Communists. But their reports are most unfortunate—especially since the Communist convention decisions are now the target of a campaign of misrepresentation by government authorities in Washington.



The press here could not fail to report while the convention was in progress that the Party was taking new and dramatic steps to establish itself as a fully independent American party. All this, of course, threatened to wipe out the false image which the Department of Justice had been painting of the Communists for years and which it insists on preserving. The result was that J. Edgar Hoover himself jumped into the breach with his amazing political "interpretation" of the convention and which, he made clear, everyone had to subscribe to or be accused of aiding the Communists. The same day, Senator Jenner of Indiana announced that publication by the party of

the decisions and its acceptance "at face value in so many newspapers . . . causes tremendous confusion." Jenner said that Hoover's statement had counteracted "this new campaign of subversion."

Meanwhile, Roscoe Drummond, Washington columnist for the New York Herald Tribune, reversed an earlier article he had written on the new aspects of the convention. To save himself from J. Edgar's wrath, he had Majority leader Lyndon Johnson insert his "corrected" version in the Congressional Record no less.

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EVEN THE FIRST reporting of the convention by the press did not give a full and rounded picture of the convention decisions while the Hoover version gave just the opposite. Those who really want to know what the Communists decided will have to ask the Communists themselves. In this connection an excellent editorial will appear in the forthcoming issue of Political Affairs. It gives a documented picture of the convention and its basic meaning and has been endorsed unanimously, I understand, by the National Administrative Committee of the party.

This editorial will be especially useful abroad where one-sided and, in some cases, thoroughly inaccurate convention accounts are appearing in Marxist circles.

For example John Williamson, former member of the National Committee of the American Communist Party and a Smith Act and deportation victim now in Britain, writes an analysis of the convention for "World News," a British Communist Party weekly (March 9). Unfortunately, there is little relation between this account and the forthcoming Political Affairs editorial.

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THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS editorial goes straight to what it calls the heart of the Convention's analysis of the Party crisis and errors and the basis for what the convention called a "new course." The heart of the analysis, according to Political Affairs, is to be found in the following passage of the convention's resolution:

"The roots of these errors are not to be found in the events of the past 10 years alone.

"The Marxist movement in our country has suffered historically from dogmatic application of Marxist theory to the American scene. The Communist Party inherited these weaknesses. Insufficient development of the independent theoretical work of the Party over the past decades has contributed towards our doctrinaire acceptance and mechanical application of many theoretical propositions.

"Our Party also suffered

from an oversimplified approach to and uncritical acceptance of many views of Marxists and Marxist parties in other countries.

"Bureaucratic methods of leadership, failure to develop inner Party democracy and a frequent intolerant attitude to the people we worked with have been in large measure responsible for our inability to correct mistakes in time as well as for much of our sectarianism. All these factors are interrelated; each helped to reinforce the other."

No reader of World News would get the slightest inkling of any of this from the Williamson account.

For example, Williamson refers to the debate on attitude toward Marxism-Leninism. He tells how the sharp controversy centered on the phrase that the Communist Party will "interpret" Marxism-Leninism as applied to American conditions. But as he proceeds to give at length his version of what was finally accepted, Williamson neglects to mention that the convention by majority decision did in fact for the first time in the party's history include the "interpret" formulation in its resolution.

Another example: in discussing the new constitution, Williamson says that "on the question of democratic central-

ism, the main resolution made important organizational concessions to non-Communist principles and left other formulations open to several interpretations." The British reader, unfortunately, will have no idea what Williamson considers "non-Communist" or "open to several interpretations." He will never know from Williamson's account that what the convention did was to adopt for the first time definite and specific provisions to democratize the party and guarantee the right of dissent.

Even on such undebatable matters as the election of officers, readers of "World News" will be left in the dark, to say the least. One departure of the convention from the past 12 years is that there will be no elected officers until the next convention. However, Williamson describes William Z. Foster and Eugene Dennis by their former titles and, although he is able to report the final tally for the national committee, he never mentions the decision not to elect officers. Meanwhile the article carries pictures of Foster and Dennis with titles no longer held by anyone.

Pravda and L'Humanite have also carried accounts of the convention which completely missed the mark. At any rate, the forthcoming editorial in Political Affairs should set matters straight.