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# THE COMMUNIST <sup>6<sup>th</sup></sup>

The E.T.U. Ballot-rigging

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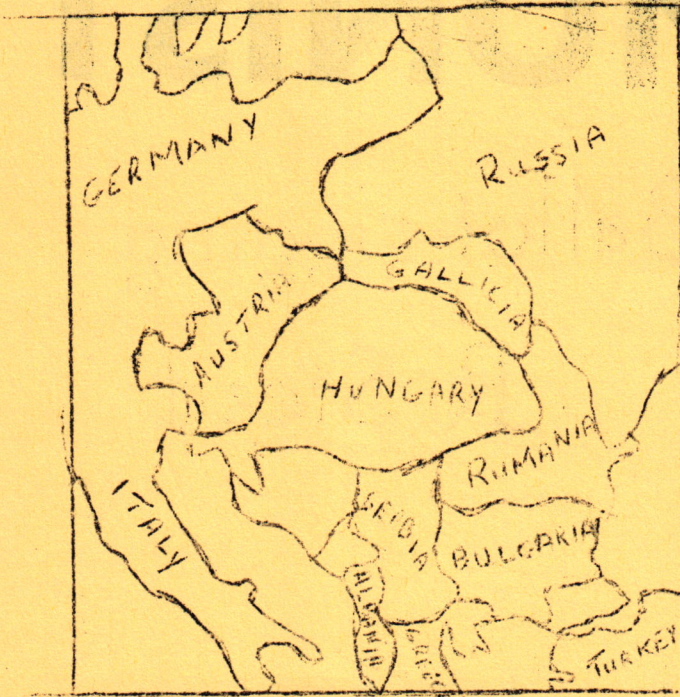
# Czechoslovakia: Part 1

by Jim Moher.

International boundaries in East-Central Europe in 1914 and 1938.

1914

1938



INTRODUCTION:- The history of the international communist movement in the last 50 years has not yet been seriously tackled from a working class point of view. Every excuse exists for the leadership of the movement up to its disruption in 1953, in that they were making this history and indeed providing very sound Marxist analysis of developments as they went along. Seventeen years later no serious effort has been made by those Parties who later opposed Khrushchevite revisionism (i.e. Communist Party of China and Albanian Party of Labour) to establish the history of the movement though they have at their disposal the resources, personnel and living experience of particular developments in order to adequately explain to workers internationally how the movement collapsed.

It is now clear that those communists who are politically conscious enough to recognise the need for such work will have to rely on their own resources to establish



what happened.

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Eastern Europe and particularly the Soviet Union must be the logical starting point for this work. Stalin's "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR" and the work based on this work done by the I.C.O. i.e. "On Stalin's Economic Problems Part I and II" provides us with the theoretical refutation of revisionism and defence of Marxism. What needs to be done is an analysis of the particular economic and political history of Eastern Europe based on this theoretical foundation. Work is going ahead amongst I.C.O. comrades on this task.

This series of articles will take up the question of Czechoslovakia as a contribution to this work.

An analysis of Czechoslovakia is important we believe for a number of reasons:

- (1) It was strategically important in the international class conflict as the articles will show.
- (2) A widespread development of communist politics took place in Czechoslovakia in the last 50 years and many of the problems of the movement are to be found here in very sharp outline.
- (3) The Russian imperialist invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 has crystalized the conflicts of the international revisionists around the Czechoslovak developments. A clear analysis of the development of revisionism in Czechoslovakia must be of benefit to those communists in the Communist Parties who are genuinely wishing to oppose revisionism but are thwarted by the barren conflict that is going on between two sets of revisionists i.e. the dogmatists and the liberal bourgeois elements.

Finally, a good amount of high level economic analysis exists in English regarding Czechoslovakia. NOTE: The revisionists have provided a substantial flow of this to the Western bourgeoisie. Czechoslovak Economic Papers is published irregularly (usually twice yearly) by the Czech Economic Institute (O.Sik used to be in charge) "New Trends in the Czechoslovak Economy" is published by the State backed Pragopress. Any communist interested in high level unadulterated (except for some slogans) capitalist economics should read these (available at Marx House).

The first articles giving a general economic-politics background are necessary so that the communists and revisionist developments can be properly assessed.

We are not interested in whitewashing any aspect of communist history in Czechoslovakia as the primary purpose of the exercise is to discover what took place. -k

#### HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND:

Located in Central Europe, the Czechoslovak state was formed by the Czech and Slovak bourgeoisie in the course of the burst up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following the 1918 war. The active alliance of the Czech bourgeoisie with the British and French imperialists during the war, ensured it a prominent share in the spoils resulting from the carve-up of Central Europe known as the Versailles Treaty.

Part of the Hungarian, German, Ruthenian (sub-carpathian Russia) and Polish populations were encompassed within the new Czechoslovak boundaries creating the basis for future national conflicts and reaction. The Czech bourgeoisie were the dominant class power in the state.



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In order to realise the significance of later structural changes in the economy made by the working class, a general understanding of the development of Czech and Slovak capitalism up to 1945 is necessary.

"The roots of industrial maturity in Bohemia and Moravia (Czech lands J.M.) reach back to the closing third of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. In Bohemia and Moravia agriculture was relatively advanced and specialized; the production of crops for technical purposes (flax, malt barley, hops, sugar beet, etc.) led to the inception of some branches of the textile and food industry. On the other hand, cultivation of technical crops and intensive tilling of the soil promoted the rise of other industrial branches, particularly the production of artificial fertilizers and agricultural machines. The first period of industrialization of the Czech lands, then, was influenced by intensive agricultural production.

"Heavy industry began to develop during the second half of the 19th century. There were deposits of coal, both hard coal and brown coal in Bohemia and, particularly, in Moravia; coking-coal began to be mined in the Ostrava-Karvina basin, forming the basis for metallurgy, which, in its turn, was the foundation of engineering. Brown coal in Bohemia made possible the development of chemistry and glass works. Large industrial centres grew up around the coal deposits: Ostrava, Ustinad Laben, Plzen, Prague (the Kladno coalfields), Brno (Rosice - Oslavary coalfields), etc.

"Bohemia was favourably situated. In the first place, there were good connections with Hamburg (and with the whole of Germany) by way of the Elbe. Hamburg was the gateway to overseas trade. There was a dense network of railways in Bohemia and Moravia the construction of which was dictated by the country's position in Central Europe. This again created suitable conditions for the development of intra-Austrian and foreign trade, which promoted concentration of industry in the Czech lands.

"Yet another favourable factor favouring the development of industry in the Czech lands was the relatively low level of wages, not only in comparison with Western Europe but with the Alpine countries, too; that is why German and Austrian capitalists wanted to invest in Bohemia and Moravia. Before the First World War, wages in the Czech lands were, on an average, 30 per cent lower than in the Alpine countries."

"The industry of Bohemia and Moravia represented about three-fourths of the whole industrial capacity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Czech lands were the industrial nucleus of the Empire. They possessed a strong national bourgeoisie with excellent foreign relations, their own bank capital, a skilled working-class and a large intelligensia."

### SLOVAKIA

"Economic development took quite a different course in Slovakia which, from the third decade of the 11th century up to 1918, was part of the kingdom of Hungary. Owing to strong surviving feudal conditions, Hungary was far less developed industrially than the Alpine countries or the Czech lands. A great part was also played by the unsuccessful bourgeois revolution of 1848, after which the defeated Hungary was administered from Vienna as an internal colony of Austria. Hungary also lay outside European capitalist trade. Up to 1867, when Austria and Hungary were equalized and dualism emerged, the Austrian ruling circles were not interested in the economic and still less in the industrial development of Hungary; indeed, such development in Hungary would fortify its military and political influence. No significant degree of industry began to appear in Hungary before the closing year of the 19th century when the ruling class of Hungary began to show an interest in the industrialization of their country.

"The policy of industrialization was manifested when the Hungarian government granted

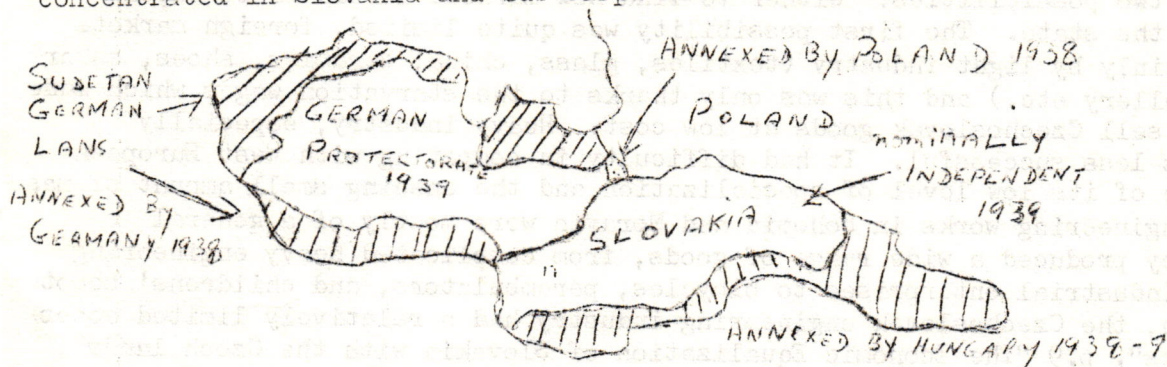


Hungarian and other capitalists subsidies and support to found industries and granted them intensive tax relief. Concessions made by the Hungarian government to capitalists also applied to Slovakia. Because, within the framework of Hungary, Slovakia had some conditions favourable for industrial development (ore deposits, wood, a surplus of cheap labour, adjacent raw material base in Ostrava, as well as nearby European markets), part of the newly created Hungarian industrial enterprises were built on Slovak soil. Beside its economic aim, the industrialization of Slovakia pursued a political goal: the further Hungarization of the Slovaks. The first industries installed in Slovakia were those for processing food, wood, iron, and leather and chemical works".

"While the food factories were more or less well equipped, other factories especially iron works, could be kept running only thanks to the support and concessions granted to their owners by the Hungarian Government. On the whole, however, both Hungary and Slovakia remained up to 1918 industrially undeveloped countries."

The Economic Equalization of Slovakia with the Czech lands: Czechoslovak Economic Papers Vol 3. 1963. Radoslav Selucky (prominent revisionist economist, in the forefront of the struggle to oust Novotny). PPT-9

Thus we can say that the general structure of Czechoslovak production in 1918 was industrial/agricultural; with great imbalance in favour of industry in the Czech lands especially light industry; with agricultural production ranging from, well developed capitalist farming in the Czech lands, to low level peasant production, primarily concentrated in Slovakia and sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.



#### THE CZECHOSLOVAK STATE:

The Czech bourgeoisie after 1918 sought to create a strong central European capitalist power which would be a rival to German capitalism and a bulwark against Communism.

"We are an industrious people, full of faith in the future, and if we do ask for the assistance of our allies, it is only because we wish them to enable us to fulfill the economic and political mission which we are destined as the most advanced, progressive and democratic people in Central Europe, and as the best and most reliable bulwark against Pan-Germanism and Bolshevism" p.11-12 "Great Britain and the Czecho-Slovaks" Vladimir Nosek, Secretary of the Czecho-Slovak delegation to London. April 20, 1919.

One side of this strategy i.e. anti-Bolshevism and anti-Soviet Union was pursued vigorously by the Czech bourgeoisie in the 20s and early 30s while the economic dependence on the German market negated the other side until the rise of Hitler forced them to change their tactics.

Already, from the beginning, the stability of the Czechoslovak state was threatened due to the general crisis which international capitalism was going through after the war, which greatly affected Czechoslovak production. The internal class struggle intensified forcing the bourgeoisie to grant many reforms to the proletariat in order to contain their revolt. The dominant form of bourgeois politics in this period was a social democracy. There was also a very big communist development. Added to this,



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national conflicts gave rise to very fragmented bourgeois politics.

With the stabilization of international capitalism (1924-29) and the resultant increase in trade, the Czechoslovak state became more stable as class and national conflicts died down. It was a brief respite however as the inherent structural weaknesses of Czechoslovak capitalism became brutally apparent with the massive international slump from 1929-32. Few major capitalist countries were hit as severely. Czechoslovakia was one of the last, major capitalist countries to regain 1929 levels of production i.e. not until 1936-7. To understand why, it is necessary to look briefly at the changes which occurred for Czechoslovak capitalism on the break-up of the Empire.

#### EFFECTS OF THE BREAK-UP OF THE EMPIRE:

"Austro-Hungarian industry remained on Czechoslovak territory but only one fifth of the land and one quarter of the population. Before the war, the industries of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia were not producing for "their own", domestic market. (The Empire was of course then "their own" market J.M.). The industries of Bohemia and Moravia produced for the whole Austro-Hungarian Empire, those of Slovakia for the whole of the Empire beyond the river Leytha."

"After disintegration of the Empire, the capacity of Czechoslovak industry came into conflict with the restrictions of her domestic market. Industry in the Czech lands was faced with two possibilities: either to find new markets abroad or to expand markets within the state. The first possibility was quite limited, foreign markets were reached mainly by light industry (textiles, glass, china, ceramics, shoes, sugar, artificial jewellery etc.) and this was only thanks to the starvation wages which made it possible to sell Czechoslovak goods at low cost. Heavy industry, especially engineering was less successful. It had difficulty in competing with West European states, because of its low level of specialization and the ensuing small amount of mass production. Engineering works in Bohemia and Moravia were mostly of a general character. They produced a wide range of goods, from complicated heavy engineering equipment for industrial enterprises to bicycles, perambulators, and childrens' scooters. For this reason, the Czechoslovak engineering industry had a relatively limited access to world markets". p.9 "The Economic Equalization of Slovakia with the Czech lands", R. Selucky.

The disruption of their former 52 million market (Poland, Rumania, Austria and Hungary were all now erecting tariff barriers to protect their new infant industries), and the non-ability to gain compensatory alternative European markets first forced the Czech bourgeoisie outside Europe increasingly and finally against their partners in the Czechoslovak state.

"Not able to find a market on a large scale abroad, it sought one at home. This (engineering J.M.) and other branches of industry, turned to Slovakia for a market", p. 9-10 Selucky ibid.

Thus the Czech bourgeoisie sought to solve their market problems at the expense of the Slovak nation (which they didn't even recognise as a separate nation). Here we have a classic example of the operations of a market economy where commodities are produced for exchange i.e. in order to realise their exchange value. The use value of the commodities is of secondary importance, as are the needs of the population. As long as boom conditions exist the market mechanism indirectly meets certain needs but in conditions of a declining market its "every man (i.e. capitalist) for himself". Here the means of production are commodities whose value in the eyes of the Czech capitalists is to sell them to the highest buyer not to promote the development of the Czechoslovak economy. Restricted on the international market they turn in on the internal market and begin to remove obstacles in their way i.e. Slovak heavy industry.



"The struggle for the Czechoslovak domestic market between Czech and Slovak capital was decided in advance. The Slovak bourgeoisie was much weaker than that of Bohemia (as the Czech lands were historically called J.M.). It lacked the backing of powerful banks of its own. After 1918, Slovak industry lost the support of the Hungarian government. All this meant that the Czech bourgeoisie, which in 1921-22 and later in the critical years of 1929-33 practically liquidated the heavy industry of Slovakia (chiefly metallurgy and iron works), won the battle for the Slovak home markets and indeed for Czechoslovakia as a whole. During the period 1918-32, a total of 260 industrial undertakings vanished from Slovakia. They had employed about 28,000 persons. The main cause for the destruction of Slovak heavy industry, especially the iron industry, was the victory of Czech finance capital in the competitive fight for Slovak markets. A high degree of concentration in production and capital in the Czech lands and powerful monopolization of the iron industry brought crushing pressure to bear on the iron industry of Slovakia which was too weak to stand up to this force. The competitive fight in the consumer goods industry followed a somewhat different course. Light industry came into existence later in Slovakia than in the Czech lands. In most cases, it was better equipped technically, and there was higher productivity of labour in many Slovak light industrial factories than in similar undertakings in the Czech lands. It may further be taken into account that wages in Slovakia were on an average 20% lower than in Bohemia and Moravia; what is more, Czech light industry was not monopolized to such an extent as heavy industry and was thus unable to bring such crushing pressure to bear on its Slovak rival. Therefore, Slovak industry came out well in this encounter, upholding its fundamental position and even expanding, although very slowly. This expansion affected mainly the food and wood processing industries.

"The breakdown of heavy industry in Slovakia undermined the possibilities of industrializing Slovakia in the pre-Munich capitalist Republic. Czech finance capital behaved in precisely the way that stronger capitalists always behave to weaker ones. They turned Slovakia into an agrarian and raw material appendage, a market for Czech commodities and a reservoir of cheap labour.

Because of changes taking place in the structure of Slovak industry (the proportion of branches making the means of production lessened), the economic dependence of Slovakia on the Czech lands increased. The boom of 1925-1929 touched only the food and wood processing, and the mining industries in Slovakia. Some light industries (textiles, shoes) were again introduced into Slovakia, as well as armament factories at Povazska Bystrica ( ) and Dabnica ( ); they were built for strategic reasons, particularly because of their greater distance from the German frontier. Altogether, however, there was permanent stagnation in Slovak industrial output (his emphasis). Slovakia's share in the production of the state was around 8%, while 24% of all inhabitants of Czechoslovakia were living in Slovakia. Industrial employment in Slovakia also stagnated. In 1913 there were 92,000 persons working in Slovak factories, while in 1936 this figure had fallen to 88,000. In 1937 the number of factory workers in Slovakia rose to 105,000, mainly because of the building of armament factories. If however, we consider that between 1913 and 1937 the Slovak population grew by 20%, this 14% increase in factory workers in 1937, compared with 1913 means in fact a 6% relative decrease in industrial employment in Slovakia." p.10-11 *ibid.*

A similar stagnant pattern followed in Slovak agriculture which was already very backward productively. This economic oppression was mirrored politically and culturally in what the Slovaks came to call "Czechoslovakism". All this under the "ultra-democratic" Benes and Masar Government which the Western bourgeoisie love to talk about. Ruthenia and Slovakia were sources of cheap labour and agricultural produce for the Czech bourgeoisie.



In the German lands, the international slump hit hardest as it was here the textile industry mainly was. Mass unemployment in the region of 900,000 (out of a working class of about 1½-2m) at peak periods, compared with and outdid any other capitalist country. It was here the seeds of fascism flourished and grew so that by 1935 the Nazi Party was supported by the vast majority of the German workers and petty bourgeoisie. We haven't investigated this national conflict fully yet but surface indications seem to imply that the issues were more complex than simply Hitler fanning internal subversion of the Czechoslovak state as the Czech bourgeoisie made out. For our purposes it is enough to draw the conclusions that here again Czech and German workers have plenty of experience regarding the operations of the market to last them a lifetime.

CONCLUSION:

This then was the background against which the Czechoslovak state disintegrated in 1938-39 with the Czech bourgeoisie capitulating to German imperialism rather than accept military assistance from the Soviet Union. Their "allies", British and French imperialism, feared more the entry of Soviet forces into Central Europe than German imperialism. (See Documents published by Soviet Government from captured Czechoslovak archive documents, after the war "New Documents on the History of Munich 1958.") So the Czech bourgeoisie were afraid to stand with the backing of the Soviet Union. The vital question then we see, for the survival of Czechoslovak Capitalism (as indeed for all bourgeoisie) was the market both internal and external. When later we discuss the aspirations and efforts of the Czech and Slovak bourgeoisies in rebuilding the market economy in Czechoslovakia today and their efforts to integrate themselves into the international division of labour and so participate fully in the world market we should bear these 20 years in mind.

Clearly Czechoslovak capitalism 1918-38 was a good example of the anarchy and uneven development inherent in the capitalist development of an economy, resulting in intensive exploitation of the working classes of all nations (very low wages by capitalist standards even) vicious national conflicts giving rise to every form of reaction (fascism in the German lands, milder form in Slovakia), fantastic contrasts of standards of living, cultural development etc. (Slovakia and Ruthenia compared with Czech lands). Being totally chained to international capitalism it inevitably became a pawn in the imperialist strategy of Germany and Britain resulting in the suppression of every working class and democratic political expression (the C.P. was banned by the Czech bourgeoisie in 1938 for exposing their capitulation. 1939-45 was, of course, a period of Nazi rule).

After Munich in 1938, the Sudetan lands became part of the 3rd Reich and shortly after in 1939 the Czech lands became a Protectorate of Hitler's as Benes capitulated. A section of the Slovak bourgeoisie broke with the Czech bourgeoisie and with Hitler's aid set up an "independent" clerical-fascist state (priests played an active role in Slovak politics) which lasted from 1939-45.

During the war, Czech industry was scrambled into the German war economy. Light industry declined and heavy industry was re-directed into war production. No fundamental changes occurred in the agricultural sector.

We will continue this general economic-historic-political outline in the next article bringing us up to 1953.



# The E.T.U. Ballot-rigging

The election of December 1959 to the General secretaryship of the Electrical Trades Union was investigated in the summer of 1961 by Mr. Justice Winn and the re-election of Frank Haxell (a member of the CPGB and General Secretary since the death of W. Stevens, the previous--also CPGB--General Secretary) was found to have been illegal. The Communist Party had rigged the ballot --and (probably) had been doing so for several years.

The ETU then had 240,000 members, 2000 of whom were in the CPGB. Less than 40,000 voted at elections, so 20,000 votes were usually sufficient for a majority. But it was established that, in 1959,

- 1 Falsely-completed ballot papers had been sent to Branch Secretaries--by Head Office (For in some cases returns reached the secretary before he had distributed his genuine papers) to the members for them to vote.
  - 2 Right wing branches had been disqualified for lateness in returning the papers--after the posting dates had been falsified by Head Office.
- 1953-8:(ave)17 Branches disqualified (out of 605)  
 1959 : 112 Branches disqualified.  
 109 of these had Right wing majorities.

"The Defendants', said Mr. Gardiner (prosecution,Ed.), 'not only adopted all their usual methods, but actually excelled themselves'". (CH Rolph "The ETU Trial".)

The questions arise:How did the CPGB, the supposed advanced detachment of the working class, come to rig ballots--something clearly contrary to the workers' interests? Why was the affair dragged through the courts? Why was the ETU handed over to Les Cannon and the other pillars of the bourgeoisie, Byrne, Chapple and co? (Cannon and Chapple had joined the CP in the 1940's and left apparently over Hungary. "Les Cannon played an important role behind the scenes. Indeed if it had not been for the information possessed by Frank Chapple and Les Cannon of the methods of the CP to retain control of the policy and machinery of the ETU, the action could never have been brought to the conclusion of Mr. Justice Winn, that the ballot for General Secretary had been rigged". Spectator 4/8/61. What sort of politics had produced these so-called Communists, who calmly sat through the "British Road" and Khrushchev's speech yet were 'repulsed' by Hungary?)





The CP controlled the ETU from 1945. The reasons for their success then were--firstly, the great pro-Russian feeling in the country at the time; secondly, the activism, rhetoric and militancy of the CP members in the ETU. The CP did not gain control of the ETU by putting a clear Communist position. Therefore it could not develop the situation in the interests of the working class. Hence, the ballot rigging.

The 50's saw two linked events. Firstly, the change in the make-up of the Advisory Committees". These were big, local bodies composed of CP members which secured the election of CP candidates and were centres for discussion of trades union and political affairs, etc. In other workds, they were the CP's grassroots organisation in the ETU and means of contact between the rank-and-file and the leadership, though the Advisories exercised no political control over the leadership. The lack of politics and of militancy on the leaders' parts was unpopular here, as was the rigging (which was necessary despite the existence of the Advisories). But in the fifties these committees were transformed (in cloak-and-dagger fashion) from large democratic bodies into small self-appointed groups, staunch supporters of the ETU leadership. Attempts by the previous Advisory members to raise this inside the CP were met with bureaucratic obstruction.

This change followed from the second--political---event: the growth of revisionism (alias class-collaboration) in the CPGB, as shown by the adoption of the "British Road to Socialism" in 1951. For once the CP had ceased to serve the working class, it became merely another clique striving to maintain itself in power. For such purposes a strong rank and file organisation, built on the expectation, at least, of Communist politics, were a danger. Hence they were suppressed, to all intents.

But this did not solve the CP's problems. For it could neither go forward, nor back.

To go forward would to have meant restoring the old Advisories (and facing the ensuing criticism from the rank and file over the rigging etc) developing Communist politics in the ETU and trade union movement at large, and moving Communism in Britain to a position of much greater strength. The CPGB was unwilling to do this.

Neither could the Party go back, i.e., abandon the falsely-maintained position in the Union, for the dogmatist leadership held that rigging was the correct policy.

However, merely sitting still was not a solution. The failure to advance angered or disillusioned the CP and ETU membership. Having, in effect, renounced Communism, Haxell and the rest had nothing to offer that was different from any other trade union leadership. Yet the name--and the rank and file--lingered on.



The situation must have been, to say the least, embarrassing: the Communist Party had control of the UK's seventh largest union --yet beyond a high degree of militancy on the economic level, little came of it. Certainly nothing in the way of Communist politics. The CP were relieved of this embarrassment in due course, or rather they took the action necessary for that to happen--they did nothing. The method of rigging was centralised and, as the trial showed, was easily detectable. The public accusations of rigging date from 1956. The whole thing was very precarious, the chances of being found out were enormously high. By doing nothing, the CP invited the defeat at the hands of bourgeois justice which was the only possible way it could have shed the burden. That this involved selling the working class in the ETU down the river--to Les Cannon etc--was for the Party, beside the point. It escaped from the encirclement, though at a price; the ETU membership have also paid a price, and are still paying one, as the productivity deals go through.

The CP's lack of politics in the ETU can be easily be shown.

First, there is the change in the Advisory Committees--and the change(in '52) in emphasis from factory to constituency branches. (This is because the "British Road" relies on Constitutional methods and thus constituency organisation).

Secondly, after the 1947 union election, the ETU's election rules were amended--campaign addresses were to be vetoes by Head Office, and were not to mention political parties! Somewhat of a disadvantage for clear, principled, Marxism-Leninism. (Also there was to be no appeal against the scrutineer's report, i.e., the result.)

Thirdly, in the ETU journal the CP had a marvellous chance to reach thousands of workers. Yet what do we find? Unreserved support for the Labour Party, uncritical appreciations of Nye Bevin.....

Other examples could be used, e.g., Haxell's speech at the 1955 TUC debate on nationalisation, where he recommended planning and public ownership to counter foreign competition, i.e., a bourgeois nationalist radical position. But the point is established, the CP's lack of politics is clear.

The bourgeoisie, at any rate had their attitude to the ETU's CPGB leadership all worked out. They saw no threat from the ETU, for no real campaign to oust them was waged, even at the height of the cold war. Not even on the economic front did the CP leadership represent a serious threat. In Spring 1954 a guerrilla strike was fought in the contracting industry. This was the first-ever guerrilla strike in the UK, and certainly the bourgeoisie felt threatened, to judge by government and newspaper pronouncements. The strike grew in strength as time went on, and the employers retaliated with lock-outs. After three months,



agreement was reached and the ETU leaders, from a position of undoubted strength, squeezed the employers for.....no less than 20% an hour! As the press commented, they would have got this without striking in all probability; the cost of living had risen 5%, other unions were getting 6-7%. The 20% increase was 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ %. The power built by the guerrilla tactic was squandered.

It is interesting to note the bourgeoisie's attitude to the Right wing (Cannon, Chapple, etc.) At the end of the trial, a series of declarations were made by the court, in which guilt and punishment were laid down, on the basis of recommendations from Cannon's counsel. One of the recommended declarations condemned Haxell etc 'in their roles as officers of the ETU'--if this had been endorsed by the court in this form it would have been tantamount to repealing the 1906 Trades Disputes Act which established legal immunity for the Unions. The Judge, a pillar of social-democracy, would have none of these reactionary, de-stabilising goings-on, and the phrase 'officers of the ETU' was deleted.

The Right were, of course, organised and prepared. There is no reason to believe they had any motive other than personal self-aggrandisement. As previously stated, a policy of full co-operation in the implementation of productivity deals has been followed. (Of interest here is Les Cannon's article on Productivity written in 1955 and reprinted by the CWC). The ETU has merged with the plumbers (a right wing TU); the projected merger with the G and MWU has been held up; one can only guess at the reasons why, but the fact that, when two unions merge into one, the two general secretaryships become one also, must not be left out of account. This is not to say that much differentiates Right and Left wing union leaders; merely, the approach to their problem--how to contain the unofficial movement. Militancy generally in the ETU has received a setback.

It remains to remark on the customary role of Left wing social democracy. In 1954, the New Statesman is found applauding the ETU's guerrilla strikes; in 1957, it started to publish Woodrow Wyatt's exposures of the ETU fraud, and CH Rolph (Statesman legal correspondent and ex-police Chief inspector) has been the only man to write about the trials. (Needless to say, the CPGB has published nothing--too much of a 'hot potato' as they put it. 'Showing-up' would be more accurate.)

So while attempting to espouse and lead the workers' struggle, left wing social democracy always retains its bourgeois, anti-working class, anti-Communist position. Though in this case the CPGB and the working class are not to be identified, it is still interesting to see how Wyatt's dogmatic anti-Communism is given all aid and comfort.

An interesting feature of the case is the actions of Sam Goldberg, a member of the ETU executive, who was, prior to 1946, a member of the Trotskyist RCP. He subsequently joined the Labour Party, but



was a 'not very scrupulous henchman of Haxell' (Judge). He 'failed to discover' obvious irregularities in connection with some Jarrow branch elections in the 1950's, and issued a white-washing report, covering up CP activities there. Once again it seems, trotskyism and revisionism find little to quarrel over.

The last item to note is the conduct of Reg Birch. He must have known what was going on, as it was common knowledge within the Party, and Haxell was a member of the executive committees of both the CPGB and the ETU. Yet what steps did the present general secretary of the CPB (ML) take? Such steps as led to a seat on the executive of the CPGB in a short time, it turns out. Dangerous questions were asked by rank and file CP members, but it was not Reg Birch who asked them. No statement as to why he did not ask them has yet been made; the accusation of opportunism has not been answered.

Rick Stead.

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## Moves on the "Left"

The official wing of British Social Democracy has now been in power for over five years. During this period, it has quite clearly revealed itself to all but the most sections of the working class as being totally dedicated to serving the interests of British capitalism. This has led to a grave decline in the influence of official Social Democracy over the working class. This is not a situation unique to Britain, it has already manifested itself over much of Europe. Unless Social Democracy can maintain its influence over a considerable section of the working class it is of no value to capitalism.

What we are seeing at present is the attempt by British capitalism to develop 'Left' social democracy as being the most effective method of diverting the rising tide of working class industrial militancy into safe channels.

The Morning Star Fortieth Anniversary Rally on March 1st last was the occasion for a significant attempt at such a development. The speakers at this meeting were Hugh Scanlon, a prominent Left Trade Union official, Russell Kerr, a leading member of the Tribune group of Left Labour MP's, and J. Gollan, secretary of the British revisionist Party.



From the political viewpoint Kerr's contribution was the most important. In the course of his speech he presented the idea of a 'Triple Alliance' :--

- 1 the CPGB
- 2 'Left' Social Democracy--including the Tribune group and such 'Left' trade union leaders as Jones, Scanlon etc.
- 3 the International Socialism faction of trotskyists or semi-trotskyists.

The CPGB is, at the moment, passing through a severe crisis. The people who acted as the chief agents of Khrushchevism from 1956 onwards, i.e., Dutt, Rothstein, etc, are being thrust aside. The reason for this is that they have by now served their purpose of smashing what working class politics existed in the CP. A new generation of revisionists, e.g., Carritt, Johnstone, Ranclson, etc, has emerged. These people are preparing to carry revisionism to its logical conclusion, i.e., a complete alliance with 'Left' Social Democracy.

A certain degree of working class opposition to revisionist policies is developing within the CPGB. At its recent Congress this manifested itself in the form of opposition to the leadership's support for Dubcek in Czechoslovakia. This anti-Dubcek grouping, apart from such political corpses as Dutt etc who represent Soviet revisionism within the British CP, included a strong working class content who instinctively oppose the revisionism of the leadership, but, who, due to their lack of a clear theoretical understanding of revisionism, cannot oppose them on the basis of their role in British working class politics. This lack of theoretical understanding leads them into the position of supporting the social imperialist Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. This situation clearly shows that the dogmatist positions of the past can give no answer to present day revisionist politics.

The Tribune group or, orthodox 'Left' Social Democracy, finds itself in a very weak position. In the eyes of the workers it is identified with anti-working class policies of Wilsonism. In order to function effectively in the interests of capitalism, it must maintain a degree of influence over the working class. It is doing this mainly through its close links with the left wing of the trade union bureaucracy which by various manoeuvres is helping capitalism to ride out the present wave of industrial militancy.

The International Socialism group represents yet another element in this developing coalition. This grouping which is perhaps the most rabidly anti-Communist of the British trotskyist sects has recently been making very friendly overtures towards the revisionists. Some time ago they organised a joint meeting in London on productivity deals. A conspicuous feature of this



meeting was the complete absence of any political discussion. The fact that they are now moving towards a rapprochement with the CP represents a complete volte-face on the part of IS. In 1966, Cliff (or Gluckstein) the main IS theoretician, spoke at a conference in Belfast organised by the Irish Association of Labour Student Organisations (a trotskysts front group now defunct). In the course of this conference Cliff declared that the CPGB (He referred as 'Stalinists' of course) was 'finished'. He advocated that militants should have nothing to do with the CP; instead they should work in--guess what--the Labour Party. On being asked for his reasons for believing that the CP had collapsed Mr. Cliff gave as the final proof the fact that Mr. Reg Birch had resigned from it. At that time, Cliff was making great use of Mr. Birch and it was in his interest to inflate Birch's importance as much as possible. However the CP has survived the loss even of such a working class leader as Mr. Birch.

But the question is why after having 'buried' it three years ago Cliff and his sect now wish to establish close relations with the CP. To understand this requires an understanding of the class makeup of IS. According to a rival trotskyst group (the Socialist Labour League) the membership of IS is only about 14% working class. From our own experience we are inclined to accept this statement--at any IS meetings CWO members have attended the audiences have been almost entirely composed of students and other petty-bourgeois elements. This low working class content presents IS with very obvious problems. (Instability of membership etc). An alliance with the CP which still retains a large working class membership despite its revisionist politics would be of obvious benefit to the IS.

A recent feature of the development of revisionism has been its increasing use of trotskyst propoganda in its attack on working class politics and on Stalin in particular. This fits in completely with the converging political positions of the CP and IS.

Faced with this combination of bourgeois 'Left' groups the working class response has been particularly feeble from a Communist position. The main reason for this is the failure of the British anti-revisionist movement to develop effective Communist politics. This in turn has been due to the subjectivity and unreal sloganising which has characterised throughout. No real attempt at a Marxist analysis of British society has so far been made. Until this has been done it is futile to think of developing Communist politics--the only form of politics which meets the objective needs of the working class.

M. Lynch.

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