

LaRoque Calls For Ban On National Congress Of 4th International

By Terence Phelan

Though the increasingly militant French workers still hope that the anti-communist actions of the Stalinists are only manoeuvres (the CP increased its General Council seats in the cantonal elections, completed October 17, from 10 to 41), the Fascists, LaRoque, Doriot, deKérillis & Co., know better where lies the real threat to their gangs and plots. Calling upon the Popular Front government which has already seven times suppressed the Bolshevik-Leninist newspaper, *La Lutte*

Ouvrière, LaRoque now publicly demands in *Le Petit Journal*, organ of his Croix de Feu fascist league (now thinly disguised as the Parti Social Francais) that the government forbid the annual congress of the French section of the Fourth International, the Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste.

His grounds are significant: because only the POI has on its order-of-the-day, the question of mass occupation of factories to defend the 40-hour week, which is at present under savage attack, both frontal and sniping, by the tricksters of the Popular Front. LaRoque feels and fears the ground-swell of the workers' renewed militancy, born of an angry disillusion with a government under which wages are frozen at 1936 levels though the cost of living has gone up 51% in the last year, under which all strikes are outlawed, and their tradition a n d reformist political fakery give no reply to their outcries beyond "Patience, patience."

When, in mid-March, the Front Populaire was still prating patience, it was the aroused though leaderless workers who bodily heaved LaRoque's fascist agents out of their factories, "not without a few caresses". It is workers' militancy he fears; but how much more does he fear, lest those workers find the truly revolutionary leadership of the Bolshevik-Leninist POI! Hence his rejoicing when the Popular Front suppresses the POI's paper; hence his demand that the P. F. ban its congress.

Tardieu's Revelations

The French workers have recently had a signal opportunity to learn that capitalist democracy, far from being the antithesis of Fascism, is its nurturer and trail-blazer, in the revelations made on October 26 by former Premier André Tardieu as a witness in the diabolical suit brought by Duke Pomo di Borgo, a co-founder with LaRoque of the fascist *Crusade de Feu*—for when thieves fall out, honest men get interesting information.

Under oath, Tardieu testified that as Premier and Minister in several cabinets from 1926 to 1932 he paid LaRoque secret government subsidies, to the tune of from 220,000 to 250,000 francs, for services rendered the government by LaRoque's fascist gangs. Thus, under "democratic" capitalism, the taxes drawn from the workers are spent to prepare their further bloody suppression and enslavement.

Revelations of this sort, combined with the united front appeal by the Stalinists to the Doriot fascist youth (see Challenge

of Youth, October 1) are giving advanced workers food for serious thought on the real nature of Popular Frontism, as a form of "democratic" capitalism.

The New Upsurge

France remains in a pre-revolutionary situation amid a sharpening crisis which will soon put an end to the 'pause' which has existed since the Matignon agreements of last year. The new keynote was struck by the government communiqué of October 2 and the explanatory ministerial speeches that followed it. The Radical-Socialist Premier Chautemps piously appealed to both capital and labor to make "equal sacrifices" for the solution of the production crisis. What is meant by equal sacrifices? Well, labor must return from a 40 to a 45 hour week. And capital? Capital must also help, by "rationalizing its production." Pressed to define just what "rationalization" specifically means, messieurs the ministers frankly define it as "increase of labor-saving machinery," more overtime, and a "higher tempo of work." Such are the 'sacrifices' demanded of French capital!

But the French worker can stomach just so much. Though the conventions of the parties composing the Front Populaire have duly voted continuance of the coalition government, the sharpening of the political situation is shown not only by serious revolts within those conventions, but also by the results of the cantonal elections, in which the "extremist" parties gained at the expense of the "centre" parties. The North African colonies are in increasingly open revolt—so serious that the "government of socialist direction," as Blum calls it, has had to despatch a fleet of 78 army bombing planes to overawe and terrorize the wretched Algerians; while daily clashes between the starved and brutalized natives and the police produce their scarcely reported but regular toll of dead and wounded.

Most significantly, the ground-swell of a new militant labor upsurge, such as produced the revolutionary factory-occupations of May-June 1936, is increasingly to be felt, especially among the metal and building workers. Despite compulsory arbitration, despite the "illegality" of strikes, despite the increasingly noisome Stalinist sell-outs, the fury of the General Federation of Labor fakers, and savage police repressions, fierce sporadic outbursts of "unauthorized" strikes and factory-occupations increase daily, and spread.

The miserably paid government employees, after interminable patient waiting at the behest of their union leaders and promises of the P. F. ministers, have just been fobbed off by Finance Minister Bonnet with a "compromise settlement" that is a positive insult. Even the reformist socialists, the SFIO ministers, had to protest against it.

Bolsheviks Provide Leadership

Thus French labor learns the bitter lesson of Popular Frontism. The "pause" in the class-struggle, demanded by the P. F. government and its Stalinist supporters, is about over. The French worker has had about enough of compulsory arbitration boards, of slogans of patience and patriotism, of government leniency with the fascist gangs coupled with savage repression of militant workers. Bitter personal experience is proving to him the frivolity of the Stalinist explanations that it isn't capitalism as a system, but the wicked "200 families," who are responsible for his misery; shows him that "his" Popular Front government differs from other capitalist governments only in that it asks him to like and approve the way it crushes him.

A new strike-wave is beginning to rise. The advanced workers, fed up with the betrayals of the Front Populaire and its Stalinist supporters, look for true revolutionary leadership. That leadership is offered them by the Bolshevik-Leninists of the POI, with the slogans of direct class-action, of workers militias to smash the bullies of LaRoque and prevent another Spain, of workers' control of factories through the extension and amalgamation of the existing workers' shop committees; and its courageous and open goal—the French workers' state.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES

Stalin's Purge Extends into the Youth and Even Penetrates the "Politburo".

Stalin's Purge of Blood, "At Home"

From day to day it becomes increasingly evident that a blood purge of unprecedented proportions is taking place in Russia, under the direct guidance of Stalin. All the preceding purges pale to insignificance in comparison with the scope and depth of the current one. The chief target of the purge is once again the C. P. S. U., the Komsomol, and other organs of the "ruling party" and of the government. The purge extends not only to the G. P. U. and the Red Army, but even to the allegedly sacrosanct "Political Bureau." So swift is the pace of the purge, that the purgers of yesterday are the "purged" of today, and the purgers of today—the "enemies of the people" on the morrow.

Neue Zuercher Zeitung computes that from the time of the Kamenev-Zinoviev trial in August 1936 up to the beginning of last October, that is, covering a period of more than 18 months, there was a public record of 808 executions in the USSR. The Havas agency computes on the basis of data from 20 provincial papers that 403 people have been executed by Stalin from September 5 to October 10 last.

That is to say, in a period of approximately one month as many have been shot as had been in the previous 17 months. The closer the "elections" the more ferocious the purge becomes! This "coincidence" imperiously poses the question as to the connection between the Moscow frame-ups and Stalin's political goals within the USSR itself. In the recent period "public trials" of the Moscow variety have been taking place all over the Soviet territory. They receive no notice in Pravda, or other central publications of Stalin. Nor does the capitalist press devote much space to them, except to record them in the general tabulation of executions. They do receive notice in the Soviet provincial press.

Each province "has its own Piatakov" with this difference, that these "Piatakovs" are the very flower of Stalin's supporters of yesterday: They are in effect the very men who helped Stalin "purge" the original "Piatakovs." In many cases they were decorated only a short time ago for their "zeal" in rooting out the "enemies of the people".

Baku "Kalinin" Liquidated

One such trial took place in Baku on October 31. Only three weeks before there had been a purge, the scope of which may be gleaned from the fact that the President of the Azarbeidjan Autonomous Republic (i.e. the Azarbeidjan "Kalinin") was "arrested" on the charge of "Trotskyism and Bukharinism." Ten out of the fourteen accused in the Baku "trial" are prominent members of the C. P. Nine of them are over 40—a significant item, indicating that these are not "recent" henchmen of Stalin. Among these ex-dignitaries was Muzabekov, Chairman of the CEC of the Soviets.

Almost simultaneously with the trial in Baku came news of an "Abkhasian plot" (November 9) involving the heads of the Abkhasian G. P. U., Mikeldadze and Ampar; People's Commissar of Agriculture, Chalmatz; Director of the Tobacco Administration, Mikhail Lakoba; Director of the Azneft, Vassilii Lakoba together with the secretary of the party organization, and the chairman of the party district committee. This trial was in every detail a replica of the Moscow frame-ups: "assassination plots," sabotage, "link" with Trotsky-Serebriakov-Piatakov etc., and last but not least, "confessions" from all the accused.

"Suicides" Also Increase

On November 8 came a report in Krasnaya Tataria of 14 "counter-revolutionists" shot—among them a secretary and chairman of the party committee, an editor of the newspaper, and several agronomists.

In Gomel on November 5, the military tribunal sentenced 8 to death, among them again high dignitaries; a former chairman of the Gomel Soviet; a high functionary in the People's Commissariat of Health, etc.

This latest phase too has its "suicides", most prominent among them being the suicide of Balitsky, head of the Ukrainian G. P. U. The "Yezhov" of the Ukraine figuring as a "Tomsky!" The pretexts for removal vary as they have in the past. Thus Rudzutak, a member of the Political Bureau whom we last reported as in "disgrace" has just been "arrested" on the charge—of "criminal negligence in the preparation of the Levanovsky flight." Stalin still shies of accusing his closest henchmen of yesterday of—"Trotskyism." In Ulan Ude, in Inner Mongolia—16 have just been shot as "Japanese spies."

The European capitalist press is extremely circumspect in dealing with these latest developments, which they are nevertheless following most closely. But occasionally the newspapers carry an item or two, revealing the actual tenor of the speculations of the bourgeoisie. Thus, Neue Zuercher Zeitung, in its October 19th issue, carries a long article on the coming Stalin elections which begins with the statement that the mere reading of the Soviet press "conveys the impression of extreme nervousness on the part of the manipulators of Russian home politics." The writer even goes so far as to speculate whether the coming elections might not suffer the same fate as the widely publicized census of a short while ago, which, after a great deal of ballyhoo, was suddenly "postponed." The internal difficulties Stalin is encountering on the path to his "coronation" are no secret to the ruling tops of the imperialist countries. And the latest maneuvers of English and French diplomacy with Hitler and Mussolini are undoubtedly closely linked with the latest developments in Stalin's Russia.

J. G. Wright.

PIONEER PUBLISHERS

Seventh Anniversary

BANQUET AND SYMPOSIUM

"Twenty Years of the Russian Revolution"

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3rd at 7 P. M.

ROSOFF'S, 147 West 43rd Street

SPEAKERS

Sidney Hook
Ludwig Lore
Carlo Tresca

James T. Farrell
Eugene Lyons
James P. Cannon

Reservations \$1.50

From: PIONEER PUBLISHERS, 100 Fifth Avenue,
New York City