

The Road to Socialism, I

By William Z. Foster

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in February, 1956, Secretary N. S. Khrushchev outlined the possibility, in certain capitalist countries, of establishing Socialism by parliamentary action. Previously, the Communist parties in many countries, over a number of years, had been developing this general tendency with their people's front policies; but Khrushchev added clarity to all this. Foster's article below expresses this trend in the United States. His article was written several days before Khrushchev spoke.

Bourgeois spokesmen, including government prosecutors in Smith Act cases, are now torturing the speech of Khrushchev into an alleged meaning, that it excludes the possibility of a parliamentary advance to Socialism in the United States, when he stated that in the countries where capitalism remains strong and has a huge military and police apparatus, "There the transition to Socialism will be attended by a sharp class, revolutionary struggle."

It is true, of course, that the United States is a very powerful capitalist country, and as Comrade Foster indicates in his article, the monopoly capitalists can be expected to make a most vicious resistance to the democratic and constitutional advance of Socialism in this country. But what forcible resistance they will be able to offer in the future when Socialism becomes a question of immediate political action may be a very different matter, with world capitalism, including American capitalism, constantly sinking deeper into general crisis. In this connection, in the pamphlet, In Defense of the Communist Party and Its Indicted Leaders, written in 1949, Foster pointed out: "It may well turn out that it will be far easier for the American working class, in the midst of an overwhelmingly Socialist world, to establish Socialism in this country than now appears to be the case, with American capitalism at its peak of strength."

Capitalist apologists are now also saying that Khrushchev, in enunciating the possibility of achieving Socialism by parliamentary action, has discarded Marxism-Leninism. This is ridiculous. As Foster makes clear in his article, all the greatest Communist leaders, proceeding upon the basic principle that Marxism is a guide to action, not a dogma, have upon various occasions during the past century restated their perspective of the road to Socialism in accordance with changing economic and political conditions. This is what Khrushchev has done.—The Editor

THE GENERAL MANNER in which the workers of the world expect and plan to achieve Socialism has always been a question of major concern. From the inception of the Marxist movement over a century ago its leading theoreticians, Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, have always paid basic attention to the concrete way, in the main if not in detail, by which Socialism may be achieved. And one of the greatest strengths of Mao Tse-tung, the leader of the Chinese Revolution, has been his constant development of this matter. The consideration of the road to Socialism inevitably has ever been a fundamental part of the basic Marxist program.

The utmost clarity regarding the way to abolish capitalism and to establish Socialism is imperative—in order to light up the path of the advancing working class, to prevent the workers from being misled by opportunist theories of the automatic growing over of capitalism into Socialism, to guard against destructive distortions and misrepresentations of the Marxist program, and to save the workers from being confronted with basic problems which they have not previously contemplated.

One of the most constant features of the century-long discussion of the road to Socialism is the fact that the outstanding Marxist theoreticians, starting with the *Communist Manifesto*, have always spoken with frankness on the subject. They have not hesitated to discuss fully with the workers all the questions of legality

and violence, relating to the central problem that stands ahead of the working class. The works of Marx, Lenin, and others are full of this frankness. The need for such open discussion is just as great now as ever. This is the only way that the class enemy's lies on this subject can be refuted, and, at the same time, the understanding of the workers be made sure and firm. The Communist movement must never leave itself exposed to charges of conspiratorial designs: that it holds in reserve secret political intentions, which it does not fully explain in its program. There are especially good reasons now why the Communists should speak out freely and frankly about how they foresee the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

Concern about the road to Socialism has naturally become of greater moment during the past 40 years, since the establishment of Socialism has become a practical question in various countries. The general result of the Marxist studies in this question, however, has not been the working out of an inflexible, blueprint forecast of the proletarian revolution, but a conception subject to substantial variations in the different circumstances of the many countries of the world. It is a striking example of the flexibility of Marxist theory and analysis.

Although Socialism is manifestly not on the immediate agenda in the United States, nevertheless it is especially important for the American Communist Party to have in mind

a clear conception of the road to Socialism in this country—not an elaborate scheme in rigid detail, but at least a perspective in general outline. The C.P.U.S.A. has had two striking examples recently of this elementary need. First, there was the attempt of Browder to implant in the Party a confusing and crippling theory and policy of trailing the working class after monopoly capital, as the way to realize the political monstrosity that this opportunist would have substituted for Socialism. Browder was defeated, but his kind of opportunism—"progressive capitalism"—still lingers actively upon the political scene in this country. Second, there is the current persecution of the leaders of the Communist Party by the government under cover of its gross distortion of the Party's ultimate program: to the effect that the Party teaches and advocates the violent overthrow of the United States Government. To meet these and similar attempts to cripple the Party, it is imperative that our Party, as other Communist parties, should have an understanding, in at least outline form, of the road to Socialism in the United States. That we have not presented and fought more aggressively in court for such a program has been one of the most serious weaknesses of our trial defense.

MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN CONSIDER THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Already in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, Marx and Engels con-

cerned themselves basically with the question of the road to Socialism. Under the then-existing conditions, they made it quite clear that the workers—oppressed, exploited, mostly devoid of the ballot, and living under tyrannical governments—in the face of all this repression and violence, would have no alternative, in fighting their way towards Socialism, than to conduct a revolutionary struggle: one outside the narrow forms of capitalist legality and against the capitalist class, the feudal nobility, and their political state. Among its statements to this general effect, the *Manifesto* says: "the violent overthrow of the bourgeois state lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat." Marx also said, "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one." (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 829). Marx and Engels then saw no prospects for either a peaceful or a legal revolution. They, however, always opposed this idea of *coups d'état* by minorities and based themselves upon actions of the great majority of the people.

In making such generalizations, Marx and Engels did not, however, lay down an ironclad dogma. Two decades later Marx (with Engels' agreement) made an important modification of the earlier statements in the *Manifesto* regarding the road to Socialism. Writing to Kugelmann in 1871, he said: "The aim of the proletarian revolution is no longer (as used to be thought) to transfer the

bureaucratic and military machine from one set of hands to another, but to *smash* that machine. This is the indispensable prerequisite for any genuine folk-revolution on the Continent."

By the words "on the Continent," Marx intended, as it turned out later, to make a reservation in his generalization regarding the road to Socialism in Great Britain and the United States, where bourgeois democracy was then far more highly developed than in the European continental countries. No doubt, factors in Marx's reservation on this point were, the establishment of a pretty general manhood franchise in Great Britain during the 1860's and the enormous current growth of the American proletariat, of whom the men already possessed the general franchise.

A few years after the Kugelmann letter, in 1878, Marx, in replying to the German government's charges in the Socialist trials of the time that the German Socialists advocated force and violence for achieving Socialism, elaborated upon his earlier remarks regarding Great Britain and the United States, by pointing out at least a possibility of a legal, if not inevitably a peaceful, course for the revolution in these two countries. He said:

The goal in this case is the emancipation of the working class and the transformation of society involved in this emancipation. The fact, however, is that historical development can remain 'peaceful' only as long as those

who hold power in society at a given time do not place violent obstacles in the way. If, for example, the working class in England or the United States should win a majority in the Parliament or Congress, it could legally abolish those laws and institutions which obstruct its development and it could do this only to the extent that social development exhibits such obstructions. And yet the 'peaceful' movement could turn into a violent one as a result of the insurrection of those interested in the old order. If they are crushed by *force* (as they were in the American Civil War and the French Revolution) it is as rebels against the legal powers.*

Marx wrote this passage during the period of the latter phase of the competitive stage of capitalism. At that time monopoly capital was already beginning to appear. Subsequently, Lenin, as other great Communist thinkers, was likewise intensely interested in the road to Socialism, and also like them, always considered Marxism to be not a dogma but a guide to action. Hence, almost 40 years later and in a changed situation, he proceeded to amend Marx's formulation of 1878. Writing in 1917, at the height of imperialist capitalist development, he declared that Marx's distinction regarding a possible "legal" revolution in Great Britain and the United States, which was true when Marx made it, no longer applied. Lenin said, "Nowadays, in the epoch of the first imperialist war, Marx's reservation lapses. Britain and the United States, which have been

* Marx-Engels, *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 516-17.

up till now (thanks to their exemption from militarism and bureaucracy) the last and greatest embodiments of Anglo-Saxon 'freedom,' have at length come, like other nations, to wallow in the foul and bloody mire of bureaucratic and militarist institutions, which establish a universal tyranny. Today, in Britain and the United States, no less than elsewhere, the *smashing*, the destruction of the 'ready-made State machinery' (which in these lands had during the years 1914-1917 achieved the same imperialist perfection as on the Continent of Europe) 'is the indispensable prerequisite of any folk revolution'" (Cited by Stalin in *Leninism*, Vol I, p. 111). In this conception Lenin saw no chance for either a legal or peaceful revolution in these two countries. In the same volume, written in 1926, Stalin fully supports the position of Lenin, but with some important considerations, or reservations, to which we shall return further along.

It is of the utmost importance, in noting the variations made in the Marxist conception of the road to Socialism, to realize that all this is nevertheless, one unified historical political-ideological development. It is not that Marx "corrected" himself in 1871 and 1878; or that Lenin in 1917 "corrected the earlier mistakes" of Marx, or that the Communist parties of today, with their strivings for the most peaceful and legal advance possible towards Socialism, as we shall develop further along, are now "correcting" Lenin. The whole

development, since the *Communist Manifesto* of over a century ago down to the present time, has been a matter of applying the basically correct principles for the establishment of Socialism, worked out by Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto*, to the evolving capitalist system and Socialist movement throughout over a hundred years of social development.

Lenin, like Marx, had no blueprint of the Revolution. He was acutely aware that it was bound to take on different features in different countries in accordance with varying national conditions. He said in 1917 that all nations would come to Socialism; that this was inevitable. But, he added, they would not come by identical ways. Lenin's experience in the Russian Revolution was soon to show that he, like Marx, was quick to grasp at the possibility for a peaceful path to Socialism.

These fundamental realities must be kept clearly in mind in pursuing further our discussion of the road to Socialism in the present period.

THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM IN A CHANGING WORLD

During the almost half a century that elapsed between Marx's formulation of the road to Socialism in 1878 and Lenin's modification of this conception in 1917, many profound changes took place in the economic and political world. These decisively influenced Lenin's thinking. On the one hand, the capitalist system evolved basically from the period of free competition into that of mon-

opoly and imperialism, and this change carried with it, as Lenin pointed out, the growth of huge armies, enormous monopolies, stifling military bureaucracies, and reactionary governments in all the major capitalist countries. On the other hand, there was also a big growth of working class forces—political parties, trade unions, cooperatives, etc.—as a counterweight to the increased capitalist strength. Between these two vast class forces a great revolutionary clash was developing at the time, immediately marked by the outbreak of the Russian Revolution and by revolutionary struggles in various other European countries. It was in this general setting that Lenin made his restatement of the road to Socialism; to the effect that the revolution in all the capitalist countries would be a violent one, as the imperialist employers would everywhere counter-pose violent opposition to the democratic advance of the force of Socialism.

Since Lenin wrote this formulation, in his turn, over a generation ago, further tremendous economic and political developments have also occurred. These profound social changes must, therefore, be evaluated, with special reference to their effects upon the ever vital question of the road of the working class to Socialism. In making this evaluation, there must never be lost sight of the elementary fact that Marxism is not a closed intellectual ritualism, but a dynamic and flexible system of proletarian philosophy. As the *History*

of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union says, (p. 355): "The Marxist-Leninist theory must not be regarded as a collection of dogmas, as a catechism, as a symbol of faith, and Marxists themselves as pedants and dogmatists. . . . As a science it does not, and cannot, stand still, but develops and perfects itself." This principle of flexibility applies to the question of the road to Socialism, as we have already seen in the varying concepts of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

In this Marxist spirit, there are two major changes in today's world situation, over that of 40 years ago, which must be considered in our analysis of the present-day Marxist-Leninist concept of the road to Socialism. The first of these basic changes is that, during the past generation, there has been a tremendous weakening of the world capitalist system and of its general international position and perspectives. Its internal and external contradictions have become intensified to such a degree that the whole system, gravely weakened over the years, is relatively rapidly sinking deeper and deeper into its incurable general crisis, which begins 40 years ago. Monopoly capitalism has definitely lost one-third of the world to Socialism and its grip has been greatly weakened over additional huge territories, in that its colonial system, which historically has been a vital prop to world capitalism, is now in an advanced and increasing stage of anti-imperialist revolution. Besides all this, the economic and political structures of

several major industrial countries are in a decidedly shaky condition. Capitalism, in general, is in decay.

The second vast change that has taken place during the past generation, and this we must also consider in dealing with the question of the road to Socialism, is a tremendous strengthening of the world forces of democracy and Socialism. Thus, the Sôviet Union, born in 1917, has since become enormously stronger; its industrial output is now many times greater than in 1924, when Lenin died; its armed might is vastly increased, and its prestige as a world power has multiplied tremendously. Besides, the USSR, far advanced along the road to Communism, is now being accompanied by 16 other countries that are travelling in the same general direction. This makes a massive advancing Socialist contingent of some 900,000,000 people, or about 40 percent of the total population of the globe. Moreover, throughout the capitalist world there has simultaneously developed a gigantic growth of mass Communist parties, trade unions, cooperatives, peasant societies, peace organizations, and broad movements of women, youth, and other basic people's groups, far surpassing the organized strength of these types of people's organizations of a generation ago. In addition, these new revolutionary forces are, over the years, ever increasing the tempo of their advance and development.

The important thing to be noted about the above two-phased world

developments is that they represent a tremendous shift in the relationship of strength between the forces of world democracy and Socialism and those of world monopoly capitalism, and this is decisively in favor of the former. On the one hand, there has been a great weakening of capitalism, both actually and relatively, and a vast increase in world Socialist strength in every respect. To be signalized is the fact that the dynamic of change is constantly working on the side of rising Socialism; its forces are growing ever stronger than those of declining capitalism—even though this general development goes ahead, not evenly, but along a zigzag course. The significance of all this to the present study is that in the determination of the nature of the road to Socialism, the question of the relationship of strength between the Socialist and capitalist forces is of the most decisive importance.

So far, in fact, has the shift in power relations between the two world forces gone, that all factors considered, the camp of democracy and Socialism is fast outstripping the camp of monopoly capitalism in economic, political, military, and ideological strength. This trend constantly increases, with the rapid growth of the forces of democracy and Socialism on a world basis and the deepening decline of the international capitalist system. Internationally, the forces of Socialism are making much more rapid progress than is generally realized, in the fulfillment of Lenin's famous slogan of "overtaking and

surpassing" capitalism in general strength.

The foregoing analysis does not mean to say, of course, that the capitalist system is about to collapse automatically. On the contrary, world capitalism still possesses great reservoirs of strength, and to underestimate this strength, or the vigor with which the capitalists will undertake to use it against advancing world Socialism, would be a grave error. On the other hand, it would be no less a mistake to underestimate the vast and evergrowing power of world Socialism.

THE "NEW TACTICAL ORIENTATION"

The continued weakening of world capitalism and the constant strengthening of world democracy and Socialism in the decades after World War I inevitably produced fresh changes in the general concept of the workers' road to Socialism, as formulated in previous periods by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. These changes began definitely to take shape at the seventh congress of the Communist International in 1935, in the development of the policies of the anti-fascist people's front. They have continued to develop over the ensuing years.

By 1935, at the time of the decisive Comintern seventh world congress, the German, Japanese, and Italian monopoly capitalists, with the more or less open assistance of American, British, and French imperialism, were definitely embarked upon their ruth-

less drive to conquer and fascize the world through counter-revolution and world war. This reactionary offensive threatened humanity with the worst butchery and enslavement in its long history. It was a new situation for the world's workers and it called for new and bold remedies. In this spirit, at the seventh congress, the Communist parties of the world undertook to give leadership to the world's peoples against the fascist war threat, and they evolved the historic people's front policy.

There were two general phases to this policy. First, there was the Soviet proposal to draw up the peace-loving peoples of the world in an international peace-front, to counteract the war-offensive program of the Anti-Comintern Axis of fascist powers. Second, there was the creation of broad people's fronts in the respective countries, made up of all categories of democratic forces—Communists, Socialists, and Radicals; workers, peasants, intellectuals, and small business people—all united around elementary programs, aimed at defeating fascism on the national scale and at fighting internationally the looming war danger. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the people's front policy took the form of the national front, which included the national bourgeoisie, and with national liberation, along with peace and anti-fascism, in the center of its program.

Among the developing implications of the people's front policy in individual countries were: a) a fight

to win in the national elections, on the basis of an elementary anti-fascist, anti-war program, parliamentary control of the respective capitalist governments, at least in those countries with a developed bourgeois democracy; b) the going over of the masses from the defensive to the counter-offensive—towards more advanced political policies; and c) the curbing and defeating of the attempts of the reactionaries to destroy the people's rights and bourgeois democratic governments by outright violence.

The above, in short, was the "new orientation" of the seventh C. I. Congress, and it represented, in its strategy and tactics, a wide development, along Leninist lines, of previous Communist conceptions and practices. The people's front movement was launched primarily as a tremendous defensive struggle against the national and world fascist-war threat. But it soon passed over onto the offensive against fascist reaction generally. In the countries of bourgeois democracy it represented a tendency to consider the revolution, not as a sudden insurrectional blow, but as a more protracted process of struggle. In the countries without democracy the problem, as before, remained primarily one of direct attack upon entrenched autocracy; but the people's national front united greater masses than ever for this task. As the sequel showed, the people's front policy, with its variations and follow-up movements, marked the beginning of a new road to Socialism.

THE STRUGGLE FOR A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY

Immediately upon the initiation of the people's front movement, the Communist parties, in those capitalist countries where there was at least manhood suffrage and some measure of democracy, developed the orientation of a struggle to elect people's front governments under the existing bourgeois constitutions, in the expectation that this could be done. Two elementary conditions made such an electoral policy come within the range of possibility. These were, first, the broad character of the people's front alliance; including workers, peasants, intellectuals, small business elements, etc., who comprised an overwhelming majority of the population, and, second, the burning urgency of the people's front program, the fight against fascism and war, which set these vast masses into active political motion. All this on the background of a weakened world capitalist system and a rapidly growing world Socialism.

The perspective of actually electing a people's government within the framework of capitalist state constitutions was not, however, entirely new to the Communist movement, as Lenin made clear at the second congress of the Comintern in 1922.* However, the key stress laid upon this course was new. The movement definitely challenged the capitalists' parliamentary control of the state by mobilizing against them the voting

* See, W. Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals* (N. Y., 1955) p. 333.

strength of the vast people's front masses. The feasibility of this policy was quickly demonstrated by the winning of strong parliamentary majorities in the national elections in Spain and France early in 1936, despite desperate efforts of the reactionaries to break down the existing bourgeois-democratic electoral systems. The people's front masses were determined to win the state power from the capitalists' control and to use it in their own behalf.

This program of parliamentary political action immediately brought about another new policy on the part of the Communist parties; namely, that of participation in Left governments that were still functioning within the framework of the capitalist system. For example, the people's front governments, specifically in Spain and France, had not broken with capitalism. In France the Communist Party was only unofficially a part of such a people's front government, but in Spain it became a full-fledged member. It is important to note that the participation policy was at this time definitely established for Communist parties, and this orientation has become more firm with later developments.

Prior to the formulation of the people's front policy in 1935 at the seventh world congress, it had been the traditional Left-wing policy, over many decades, to refuse participation in the leadership (cabinets) of governments committed to the maintenance of the capitalist system. Many bitter fights took place during

the pre-World War I period in the Second International over this question. The abstentionist attitude of the Left was correct then because, in reality, the entry of Socialist leaders into bourgeois governments meant that opportunists such as Millerand, Viviani, Burns, and others of the dominant Right-wing ilk, inevitably committed betrayals of the workers' cause into the hands of the employers.

Under the conditions of broad people's front movements, however, in the face of militant reaction and in the environment of a decaying capitalist system, it was quite a different matter for the participation by representatives of the strong Communist parties in Left governments that had not broken with capitalism. Thus, the participation policy was widely developed in the various coalition governments that grew up in many parts of Europe after the overthrow of the Hitler regime in World War II. The Anglo-American governments, however, were rigidly opposed to this Left-coalition policy, and by the use of money and political pressure, they managed to exclude the Communists from such governments in France, Italy, and Belgium—which were made up of those parties that had fought Hitler. In Eastern Europe, however, where Soviet influence was predominant and the Communist parties were very strong, the Left-coalition governments of the peoples succeeded in marching on to people's democracy and to the eventual building of Socialism.

The fight of the Communist parties and people's front movements for a parliamentary majority has nothing in common with the political opportunism of Right Social Democrats. It is based upon the Leninist understanding that the bourgeoisie will defend capitalism with every weapon and tactic at its disposal, and that monopoly capital has to be curbed and defeated by the proletariat and its allies. Between Marxist-Leninists and Right Social Democrats the question never has been that the latter wanted a peaceful road to Socialism, while the former said that it must necessarily be a violent road. The fundamental issue was that the Right Social Democrats, with their basically bourgeois program, had abandoned altogether the fight for Socialism, whereas the Communists have been ever and always its indefatigable champions, whatever might be the requirements of the struggle.

THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE OF THE PEOPLE'S FRONT

In addition to this fight for parliamentary majorities, the second basic element of the people's front policy that we should note, in connection with our general analysis of the road to Socialism under current conditions, is the counter-offensive, or Leftward orientation, which usually, if not always, governments of the people's front and people's democracy (and the national front in colonial countries) express. The people's front has a revolutionary potential which can be developed. To cultivate

this Leftward orientation, by transforming the bourgeois state, is indispensable for people's governments if, born in crisis situations, they are to cope with the urgent problems thrust upon them by the development of the general crisis of capitalism, internationally and in their respective countries. This Leftward policy is a recognition of the continuing correctness of Marx's principle which he enunciated after the Paris Commune, to the effect that the workers cannot simply seize upon the readymade machinery of the bourgeois state and use it to their own revolutionary ends.

People's front governments are usually elected on elementary programs of demands during periods of intense political ferment, as in the struggle to prevent war, in the unsettled periods after wars, in the general struggle to prevent fascism, during a severe economic crisis, or in other manifestations of the decay of capitalism. However, people's front government, under the pressure of the crisis, ordinarily finds itself confronted with many serious problems, possibly not specifically covered by its program. Among other tasks, it has to combat the militant, even violent, attacks of the bourgeoisie; it must overcome the corroding opposition of Right-wing elements in its own ranks; and it must conform to the forward surge of the workers, who, after the big victory of electing a people's front, will want to press on for new conquests. Such a people's

front government consequently must go over to the counter-offensive, it must move to the Left by adopting a more advanced program, or it will die, broken down, either by direct capitalist attacks from the outside or by opportunist disruption from within. Its Leftward course, tending to dismantle and remodel the state controls of the bureaucratic, militaristic, and monopolist elements—which are the barriers to the workers winning parliamentary control and to achieving their program when they do win such majorities—is the legal application of the Marxian principle of the break-up of the capitalist state.

The history of the pre-war French and Spanish people's front governments goes to prove the imperative need of carrying out such a counter-offensive. In France there was a tremendous surge forward of the workers during the strong people's front movement. In addition to electing the new people's front government in April 1936, the workers conducted unparalleled general strikes, mainly of the militant sit-down type; they built up their unions from about 1,000,000 to 5,000,000 members; they unified their badly-split trade union movement, and they enormously strengthened the Communist and Socialist parties. If the French people's front government finally disintegrated, it was because, due to the resistance of the Right-wing Socialist and petty bourgeois Republicans, that government was not able to move to the Left solidly and quickly

enough to cope with the many new problems which confronted it. In Spain, the situation was basically the same as in France. The people's front government, elected in February 1936, failed to rise aggressively to the proper handling of the many tasks which it immediately had to face. In substance, these amounted to preventing the counter-revolution from getting under way. Consequently, the government died after the bitter civil war of three years. The basic weakness in both the French and Spanish people's front governments was that the respective Communist parties were still too weak to give the necessary firm leadership to the movements as a whole.

Characteristic of such situations, the fifth congress of the Comintern, in 1924, sharply criticized the conduct of the Communists in the Communist-Left Social Democratic workers' government of 1923 in Saxony and Thuringia, precisely for not realizing the need for a militant and progressive Leftward policy by their government. It declared that they had acted like ordinary bourgeois ministers, by failing to carry through such urgently needed measures as the arming of the workers, the reorganization of the army, the organized distribution of housing facilities to the unemployed, and the like, measures which would have given them real political control.

The American working class, within the framework of the Roosevelt democratic front movement (which bore within itself various

characteristics of the people's front of the times) also displayed strong qualities of the counter-offensive, or Leftward orientation. Far from resting content with the election and re-election of Roosevelt, the workers pressed on to the winning of other victories, the most vital of which was the organization of the basic industries and the quadrupling of the membership of the trade unions. It was a period of a veritable renaissance of the labor movement.

The necessary Leftward orientation of the people's front (or national front in the colonies) must inevitably be in the general direction of eventual Socialism, and it can actually lead to this goal. Whether the workers successfully transform their people's front government (which still operates within the framework of capitalism) into a people's democracy (which is a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat) depends upon the urgency of the political crisis; upon the general strength of the workers; upon the relationship of forces inside the people's front, and particularly upon the strength of the Communist Party. My article, "People's Front and People's Democracy" (*Political Affairs*, January 1951) which was carefully edited by our National Board and later re-published widely in the world Communist press (including *Pravda*), deals in considerable detail with many of the problems of the transition from the people's front to the people's democracy.

The history of the people's democracies which developed in Eastern

Europe following World War II—in Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Albania—shows that these governments, too, displayed in a high degree the characteristic Leftward orientation of the people's front. Their coalitions of various anti-Hitlerite parties started out, after the Soviet Red Army had rid their countries of fascism in World War II, with relatively moderate programs. But the force of circumstances enabled them all progressively to adopt more advanced programs of nationalization of industry, farm collectivization, the cleansing and remodelling of the army and police, the establishment of a planned economy, and other measures amounting, in substance, to the initial phases of laying the foundations of Socialism.

This process involved making many changes in the bourgeois constitutions, or even re-writing them—the re-organization of the governmental apparatus—which is the present-day "breaking up of the state" stressed by Marx and Lenin. It also involved the merging of the Communist and Socialist parties—which sloughed off the opportunist Right elements—and the adoption of various other important measures. At first, the Communist-left Socialist majorities in the parliaments were very small, in some cases being as little as but two or three deputies (see my book, *The New Europe*), but they quickly expanded with the consolidation and development of the new-type governments.

The carrying through of the Revolution in the countries of the present-day people's democracies in Eastern Europe, after the overthrow of the Hitler government, was basically a legal and peaceful movement. The new, post-war governments, in which the workers gained increasing power and leadership, had to put down minor counter-revolutionary insurrections in Poland, Rumania, and elsewhere, but this was done under the legal authority of the governments and with a minimum of force.

At the Seventh Comintern congress, in 1935, Dimitrov pointed out that the people's front stage of development is not inevitable in all countries. The same may also be said of the stage of people's democracy. This is because a people oppressed by a fascist or other ultra-reactionary regime, under which no democratic parliamentary action is possible, may see fit to smash outright such political tyrannies, as was done to the Hitler governments all over Europe during the war, with the full cooperation of the broadest democratic masses in armed struggle. In such cases, a people may skip the people's front stage and proceed directly to people's democracy, as they did in Eastern Europe after World War II. There is no blueprint for the advance of the workers to Socialism.

CURBING THE EMPLOYERS' VIOLENCE

The third element of people's front policies and trends that we should consider in our analysis of the road to Socialism in the present period,

(in addition to the fight for parliamentary majorities and the development of the counter-offensive) is the systematic efforts made by the people's front parties and masses (often with success) to check in advance the counter-revolutionary violence of capitalist reaction. This means that the workers strive not only to begin their march to Socialism by the legal election of a people's government under bourgeois democracy, but also, as they proceed, to curb and reduce to a minimum capitalist violent resistance to their democratic advance.

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and all other Communist leaders, have always warned the workers and other democratic forces that the exploiting classes, in the course of the class struggle, never hesitate to throw overboard their own legality and to use violence when they see fit and deem their class interests to be seriously threatened. Habitually, capitalist rulers use their courts, police, jails, armies, and other means of repression and violence against the workers and their allies. This is especially true when they confront a working class that is resolutely marching on toward Socialism. Labor history is crowded with examples of this fact. The bourgeoisie are the instigators of fascism, civil war, imperialist world war, and other types of extreme violence. Under modern conditions, social violence always originates in the ranks of capitalist reaction.

On the other hand, the working class and other toiling elements are always and instinctively the cham-

pions of peace and democracy. They pick up the sword against those who oppress, exploit, and butcher them, only when they have no other alternative, only when more peaceful methods are closed to them. They are the basic forces of democracy and peace. The Communists are the most authentic spokesmen of these inherently peace-loving and democratic masses.

The working class, when compelled to by circumstances, will fight with whatever methods are open to it, as it has proven on many occasions, including the Russian, Chinese, and other revolutions, and in World War II. The workers and their allies not only strive to defeat such violence as is directed against them, but (most important in this analysis) they also try to curb this ruling class violence in advance, to nip it in the bud, to strangle and check it, in order to prevent it from growing into a real menace to them. This elementary tendency to restrain, as well as to defeat, capitalist violence, has been too little noticed and theorized by Communist leaders. It is, however, becoming more and more of an important weapon in the arsenal of the working class, especially as the latter gains in organized strength and conquers for itself more democratic rights. This factor is increasingly exercising a profound influence upon the course of the class struggle and must be given careful consideration in estimating the present-day road to Socialism.

The modern labor movement, particularly where Communist influence

is strong, does not stand passively by while the employers organize and precipitate their world wars, fascism, reactionary civil wars, violence against strikers, and the like. On the contrary, they definitely try to stifle this violence at its outset, or before, as well as to fight it after it breaks out. This is a basic condition for the maintenance and utilization of bourgeois democracy. The workers not only have to fight to enact democratic legislation, but also to make it work. Labor history provides ample proof that in this general approach, the workers have scored some very important victories.

In all the capitalist countries the labor movement, both economic and political, has accomplished very much; for example, during the past decades, in checking police violence and the use of troops in strikes. This it had to do in order to win these struggles. No doubt the employers would now, just as willingly as ever, also have recourse to such methods of violence; but they find it far more difficult to do so, in the face of the greater strength, consciousness, and alertness of the working class. Everywhere the latter have taken elaborate precautions against precisely such employer violence during strikes.

This decisively important fact is also a reality in the United States, where the employers once freely used extreme violence in strikes. It is only twenty years ago since the capitalists made their factories into veritable forts, and every big strike was the scene of widespread bloodshed, with the employers boldly using troops,

police, and armed company thugs against the strikers. In fact, many of the strikes of a few decades ago were veritable small civil wars. But now, since the enormous growth in size and solidarity of labor's organizations, (the trade unions are presently about five times as large as they were a generation ago), the employers are manifestly having far more trouble in cowing the workers during strikes by the use of their armed forces. Strike violence by employers is by no means ended, of course, and it may at any time flare up afresh. But the important thing obviously is that the workers, through their economic and political strength, have done much to curb and diminish it, at least, where bourgeois democratic conditions prevail. This is one of their elementary necessities for a successful strike strategy.

In line with this basic restraining tendency of the workers all over the capitalist world regarding capitalist violence in strikes, the workers also seek, and frequently succeed, in curbing capitalist violence in other types of political struggles, and for the same general reasons. Especially have they combatted the attempts of the monopolists to overthrow democratic governments violently and to establish fascist or other reactionary regimes. On the same principle, of nipping capitalist violence in the bud, people's front governments, in the name of the people and as the condition for their own existence, use the state power to suppress such violence. All over the capitalist world,

the workers are today the best defenders, both of Socialist and bourgeois democracy. This significant reality has played a vital part in the capitalist world, and it has a direct bearing upon the whole question of the road to Socialism.

Take, for example, the workers' effective resistance to the well-known Kapp-putsch in Germany in 1920. On March 12th, a reactionary body of armed forces under General von Lutwitz and Wolfgang Kapp, marched into Berlin, drove out the bourgeois Weimar government, and set about establishing a reactionary regime. But they ran right into a tremendous general strike, called by the trade unions. The result was that the workers strangled the violent activities of the reactionary forces. After five days of national paralysis, Kapp and his pals fled Germany and the Weimar government was put in command again. There was very little armed fighting in the whole affair. This magnificent display of working class power and discipline was largely led by the Communists and Left-Socialists, who wanted to follow up their strike victory by taking over political power, as could have been done, but they were balked by the Right-wing Social Democratic leaders.

Since the advent of the people's front policy, this curbing trend has become more and more developed. Thus, in France and Spain, during the mid-1930's, the workers and their allies succeeded, at least for the time being, in blocking the fascist seizure

of power, by their resistance to the attempts at destroying the Republic, by their election of people's front governments, and by powerfully building their mass organizations. The trouble in France was that the workers failed to keep up the pressure upon the Socialist and Radical leaders of the Popular Front government, who peddled away the movement. And in Spain the movement failed, because the liberals heading the People's Front government refused, at the outset, to take the necessary measures of purging the army of its reactionary generals, as the Communists proposed. Franco and his gang of generals were thus able to get their counter-revolution under way. It was not written in the stars that the ill-fated Spanish civil war had to take place on any such big scale as it did. It could have been stamped out despite the Hitler-Mussolini intervention, by more determined efforts to curb the reactionaries at the beginning.

Now let us take a specific example of the curbing policies of the workers upon a higher, a Socialist level, in the people's democracies. A striking case of such a suppression of employer violence, before it could mature into counter-revolution was the throttling in East Germany by the people's democratic government of the June 23, 1953, putsch, or "demonstration." This violent uprising, an attempted counter-revolution, had in itself the potentiality of a major civil war in Germany, or even a gen-

eral European or world war; but these dread dangers were averted by the firm curbing policies of the East German workers and their government. Similar situations have also been taken care of in other people's democracies, a notable example being the timely defeat of the attempted counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. In this instance, under American instigation, a powerful bloc of 17 bourgeois ministers in the people's government resigned, which was to be the signal for a general uprising. But it failed completely, owing to the strong repressive (curbing) measures taken by the workers and their state. The general result, instead, was a great strengthening of the Czechoslovak people's democracy.

There are many other examples at hand of the workers acting vigilantly to halt reaction in time and to prevent employer *coups d'etat*. This has been notably the case, among others, in recent years in Brazil and Indonesia. In Italy, according to Walter Lippmann, Italian bourgeois leaders told him recently that they would not surrender state control to the Left, no matter how big a majority a people's front combination might poll.* But undoubtedly, when that time approaches, the powerful Italian Communist Party and its allies will be able to find the means to pull the teeth beforehand of these would-be putschists.

* For a discussion of this, see H. Aptheker, *History and Reality* (N. Y., 1955) pp. 69-70.

The concluding section of this article will appear in our next issue.—Ed.