

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Much More Needed vs. Dogmatism

Editor, Daily Worker:

Those readers who so hastily characterize as "revisionist" the advocacy of peaceful transition to socialism, not to mention the broadening of the Party through its mass work, would do well to first undertake a study of revisionism, and Browderism. There seems to be much unclarity.

As a younger Communist, I did not personally participate in the wide debate and discussion around the expulsion of Browder and his theories. I can only speak from my understanding of Browder's writings and the writing of the Party regarding them. From these, I do not see how advocacy of a peaceful transition can be construed to mean the advocacy of progressive capitalism—which is the substance of revisionism.

However, important as this question is, I believe that Mac Weiss would serve us better as National Education Director if he wrote on how Marxism-Leninism can aid us in moving forward on the immediate issues facing the American people, rather than further discourse on civil liberties under socialism. It seems to me that before the Party can fully grasp the meaning of and undertake a radical change away from dogmatism and doctrinarism (per Gene Dennis' Report) much more needs to be understood about these evils as they apply to our daily struggles.

-ROZ

Longing to Return To Our Own Back Yard

Editor, Daily Worker:

Some thoughts . . . I do not feel like throwing myself, face down, into the dirt and cry, "I have sinned! . . . I have sinned!" because of the recent developments in the Soviet Union re Stalin. . . . None of the supporters of the Soviet Union need do so, I feel. . . . The capitalists of the world have damned everything that happened in the S.U. not out of factual knowledge but because of their own peculiar class prejudice; and we defended everything in the S.U. not out of factual knowledge but because of our own peculiar class prejudice. . . . How could we have known the things they are telling us now when the Russian people themselves did not know of them? . . . To be strictly honest with ourselves, rather than fashionable, we could not have done otherwise, under the circumstances, then we did. . . .

The true picture of Stalin has still not emerged. . . . Perhaps 25 years later we shall know. . . . And by that time, if not sooner, the present leaders will be known to have committed plenty of mistakes of their own for which they will be criticized. . . . (I hope they won't be called monsters).

I feel a longing for returning to our own back yard and directing the concentration of our discussion to the multitude of problems in America. . . . Too much preoccupation with the errors and wrongdoings of people in other lands is in itself a mistake because to the extent that it keeps us away from essential work, it is a form of escape from our own responsibilities. . . . (I just saw a glaring mess of in-orderly things in our own garden; so let us begin to pull back, on a massive scale, our rakes—and other tools—from our neighbor's garden. . . .)

We do not advocate violence. . . . Progressives endure untold sufferings in their struggle to rid human life of violence. . . . But we are only one party to the dispute. . . . Would those who accuse us of force and violence agree to abide peacefully to the majority decision of the country should it choose to junk capital-

ism for Socialism? . . . I think they were asked that, but they haven't answered. . . . Well, would they? . . . In the absence of a clear-cut answer from them that they would not pull a Hitler on us at the crucial time, or at least try to, we can only speak for ourselves. . . . Therefore, to make it appear, unilaterally, that a peaceful transition to Socialism in our country might actually occur is only to delude ourselves and others, with pretty Maytime day-dreaming. . . .

But friends of all manner of opinions, let us go to work. . . . Otherwise we shall never reach the stage when the question of peaceful transition or no, curtailed civil liberties for the enemy or not, will be more than just mere speculation. . . . Life itself will answer many questions we caners with our gentle words. . . .

One more thought. . . . And let us not decapitate all our leaders with our gentle words. . . . They are not really more wormy than we. . . . (We're all in the same boat. . . .) But, together, we may be able to become clean and strong.—A.S.

American Heritage

Editor, Daily Worker:

A letter-writer says: "Constitutional Communists are fine, being radicals in the American tradition."

Which American radicals has he in mind? Eugene V. Debs, William D. Haywood, Albert Parsons, John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, Denmark Vesey, Daniel Shays, Samuel Adams?

Maybe "moderate" Socialists like Berger or Hillquit? But Berger said: "We'll back our ballots with our bullets." And Hillquit said: "We'll fight like tigers on the barricades." Both answering the question: what to do if the workers' road is finally blocked by capitalist resistance.

The raiders at Harpers Ferry, the conductors of the Underground Railway, the Parkers who harbored fugitive slaves and guarded them sword or gun in hand against duly invested agents of federal authority, the slaves themselves, were breaking laws made by Congress, nullified decrees of the Supreme Court. Garrison publicly burned the Constitution as a "covenant with death, a compromise with hell."

The embattled farmers at Concord bridge, whose shot rang round the world, opened fire on soldiers of constituted government, plying their lawful duty. The soldiers' epitaph says: "They came three thousand miles and died, to keep the past upon its throne. . . ." but that "past" was all the constitutional government the farmers had, and they struck it down!

The blood of abolitionists, rebel and runaway slaves, countless martyrs of labor, and embattled farmers of colonial times, flows in our American veins, and makes us kin to people everywhere who have risen against outworn law.

The capitalists have shot us for demanding a higher wage, a shorter day. If current crystal gazing unveils an Apocalypse in which they do not shoot us for demanding all that they possess, must we no longer nourish and nerve ourselves with our fathers' heroic tradition?

They fought under this sign: Law was made for man, not man for law! We shall be ill-advised to trade their heritage for Pollyanna pipe-dreams.

EDWARD FITZGERALD

Will Soon Show Pious Critics

Editor, Daily Worker:

The Tribune, Times, Post and other papers too numerous to mention, are bringing all their heavy artillery, in the way of editorials, cartoons, columnists,

quips, etc., to bear upon the Left in its hour of political revelation and misfortune, as a result of the publication and widespread discussion of the Khrushchev attack on Stalin. One would think, to hear them moralizing, that they were as pure as the driven snow, while we, were as black as Erebus.

They tell us in effect to either renounce our abominable dream of socialism, since it has now proven to be impossible, or take the gas pipe. Well, for their information, we are not going to abandon the hope of socialism and take the gas pipe of capitalism. We may be errant but we are not complete fools. And furthermore, if the free give and take of such an innovation as Speak Your Piece goes on, we will not only set an example for these pious critics but we will also, and before many more moons have passed, build the foundation of a solid and enduring political structure, with an outstanding corner stone of Civil Liberties. And this will be built . . . if at all, precisely because we have taken to heart and mind our past mistakes and are now determined that no obstacle shall stand in the way of a bigger and a better socialism.

Over 40 years elapsed, following the American Revolution, before our people as a whole sampled the dish now known as Civil Liberties. And over 300 years have elapsed, since the first Negro slave was brought to these shores in chains. Has Tartufe forgotten?—H. P.

Says Right and Wrong Often Not the Issue

Editor, Daily Worker:

This correspondent has on occasion been critical of D. W.'s policy of subservience to Russia. He has said he felt that your policy lent color to the charge that American Communists took orders from Russia. However, now that you have been blasted out of your complacency, there is no need to go to the other extreme. I suggest that you ponder Herbert Aptheker's letter saying "proper therapy requires accurate diagnosis."

Analysis, not hysterical emotionalism, is called for. A prime example of how not to do it, is, in my opinion, given us by Howard Fast in this issue. . . . I accepted all else that I have enumerated as a necessity of socialism. This I can never accept again—never again can I accept as a just practice under socialism that which I know to be unjust."

Do tell! He returns to what he learned at Mother's knee, that God enables us to distinguish between "right" and "wrong" and that our whole duty is to line up on the side of the angels.

I thought Communists looked at the world with clear eyes, faced the fact that "right" as opposed to "wrong" was often not the issue, that it was often "shall we hurt him, or let him hurt us." Shakespeare, three hundred years ago put it in a nut shell.

"And you must be resolved That what you cannot as you would achieve

You must perforce accomplish as you may."

In my opinion Khrushchev showed a proper revulsion to Stalin's excesses, upheld the proper ideals, yet never lost sight of the grim choice that face those who would realize ideals in a world where nature's law seems to be "eat or be eaten."

—A NON-PARTY READER

P.S.—Howard Fast may be mixed up but he's head and shoulders above me when it comes to guts. I'm 68 years old and have taken my share of knocks. I propose to put in my last three or four years doing in the sun, not as a martyr.

Let's Cut Out Detours, Keep the Proven Heart

Editor, Daily Worker:

Please! There is a difference between being self-critical and being completely abject in an uncritical way. Herbert Aptheker expresses this well (June 12). The editorial (June 7) can only excite ridicule among our enemies and scornful rejection among our friends.

So we made errors, bad errors. As did the Party in the USSR. Nevertheless the Party in the USSR attracted and held many of the best people because they knew this was the road to peace and people's justice. Even if it went off on the most horrible detours, the road was being built from both ends, from the middle, by the people, and the detours are being eliminated.

It's the same here. Let's cut out the detours 1) uncritical acceptance of dogma, 2) sectarianism, bureaucracy, 3) the leadership that fell for this. But let's not cut out the heart of the Communist program: working class control, racial equality, democracy and peace.

Communism has received the most tremendous publicity from the capitalists who tax and take, that it is for racial equality, and now too they begin to learn that Communism is for peace in spite of the blather of Dulles and Co. Above all they begin to see that power is with the people.—A.T.

Says Weiss, Critics Too Abstract on Liberties Debate

CHICAGO, ILL.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The central weakness in Max Weiss' essay on "civil liberties under socialism," and equally, of the critics of his position, is that neither one takes as the starting point the flesh and blood of the decisive struggle in the United States today for the preservation and extension of bourgeois democratic rights.

While Weiss (in my opinion) dealt in too abstract speculation about what the shape of the future might be, his critics answer with a barrage of quotations from Lenin, based upon relations of forces existing thirty and forty years ago. It is my understanding of Leninism that it always takes into consideration the concrete historical setting, time and place. To understand and apply the deep lessons of Leninism requires more than a mechanical repetition of a quotation, taken out of historical context.

It's time we learn that Marxism requires more than a good memory for learning quotations by heart.

Every great Marxist, from Marx to Lenin and Dimitroff, has stressed the importance of the working class fighting every inch of the way to realize to the fullest extent possible the promises of bourgeois democratic rights, for the very reason that working class democracy is the extension of these limited freedoms to a qualitatively higher level of freedom for the masses of people.

Today, when a section of the bourgeoisie has abandoned and turned against the achievements of the bourgeois democratic revolution, and is keeping a new, dictatorial form of class rule, the struggle for these rights, as embodied in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, must become the heart of the effort to create a new democratic coalition led by the working class. The new, ominous offensive today of Brownell, Walter, McCarthy, and Eastland against the Bill of Rights, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, and the Supreme Court (an instrument of the bourgeois state), proves this to be no abstract question.

Both Weiss and his critics are unwittingly leading us away from the realities of the struggle for bourgeois democracy today. In

so doing, they are obscuring the road to finding, in life, the answer to the questions now being so hotly (and abstractly) debated.

A discussion and study of how to develop a people's struggle to preserve and extend the Bill of Rights would be more fruitful than speculation on the the pros and cons of "constitutional socialism." The outcome of the present struggle for democratic rights will determine whether socialism can be peacefully achieved by a majority of the American people, or whether fascist reaction succeeds in destroying the right of the majority to determine the destiny of our country.

The Party needs a deep, self-critical review of its role and leadership in this decisive arena of struggle. Unless we do this now, we may lose the golden opportunity of giving a lead to the American people in this hour of decision.—R. C.

Says D. W. Writers Too Critical of Khrushchev

BOSTON, MASS.

Editor, Daily Worker:

Yes, there have been serious mistakes in the SU not disclosed by Communists until now, and the secret Khrushchev report in its State Department version is not pleasant reading. But there seems to be developing a tendency to be overly critical of the very people who are exposing and correcting the errors of Stalin. Doubtless the whole story of error and horror is not known yet, and those who are exposing the mess deserve commendation, not censure and suspicion.

When we read of men convicted as accomplices in the crime in K's report being executed, I say good! And let's hope they don't abolish the death penalty until they get them all. My stomach does not turn over like Howard Fast's, who sees in this only "the madness of vengeance and counter vengeance, of suspicion and counter suspicion." Only if K's report is merely to be equated against Stalin's errors as something equally pernicious could I take such an attitude.

Fast seems to spell out in more eloquent words the same attitude of other DW staff writers who have become so highly critical. Some are presumptuous. The facts are not all in yet, but they are trying to tell us just what the SU should do about everything, how to avoid future errors in that country, what laws to pass, what laws to repeal, etc. They sound like a bunch of chattering birds.

I suggest such fluent Marxists use their talents in the international scene to better advantage and accept this challenge: Let's see them go through Stalin's works and identify the basic errors and then compare notes with scholars of the Marx-Engels-Lenin institute when they announce their findings in days to come.

K's report gives me renewed faith in the SU. I regret the sad and bad news therein, but the exposure is good news.

—BOSTON COMMON

Questions

Editor, Daily Worker:

Who is A. A. Heller that he may write a letter of over 1,000 words while we are restricted to 300? And who is I. F. Stone that so much is written about his opinions?—A.L.

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