

political affairs

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A November Book!

TOWARD NEGRO FREEDOM

By HERBERT APTHEKER

This volume, by an outstanding authority in its field, consists of nineteen essays dealing with central aspects of American Negro history from colonial times to the present. None of these essays has hitherto appeared in book form and several of them were prepared specially for this volume. Those published before appeared in such periodicals as *The Journal of Negro History*, *The Journal of Negro Education*, and have been revised.

Included among the essays are estimates of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois, of John Brown and Abraham Lincoln, and analyses of the attitude of Quakers toward slavery, of class conflicts in the pre-Civil War South, of the nature of the Civil War. About half the volume deals with the post-Reconstruction period, especially from 1890 to the present, including studies of the Negro in both World Wars. There are extended studies also of the comparative learning abilities of white and Negro, of the contributions of Negro scientists, of the nature of America's racist laws. Critical examinations are made of the writings of such leading authorities as U. B. Phillips, V. O. Key, Jr., and C. Vann Woodward.

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A Theoretical and Political Magazine of Scientific Socialism

Editor: V. J. Jerome

Notes of the Month

By Max Weiss

"To back and fill: to navigate a vessel in a river or channel when the wind is against the tide and there is no room to tack, by so maneuvering the sails that the wind strikes them alternately in front and behind, so as to make the vessel shoot from side to side of the channel while being carried forward by the tide."

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary.

ON JULY 26, President Nasser of Egypt proclaimed his country's nationalization of the Suez Canal.

In London and Paris, the governments of Eden and Mollet thundered. They threatened war for repossession of the Canal; reservists were called up.

Mr. Dulles dashed off to London at the beginning of August. He put an ice-pack to the fevered brow of the sabre-rattlers at 10 Downing Street and the Quai d'Orsay. While not ruling out force "as a last resort," he counselled postponement of a showdown. The Tories grumbled but acceded. There was, after all, an election coming up in the United States in November. The Republicans were proclaiming themselves the "party of peace." Mr. Dulles' position was "understandable."

Particularly so since Mr. Dulles

approached the Suez crisis from the viewpoint of the higher moralities of international justice. These, of course, transcend empire and colonialism. He declared loftily that international waterways must not be controlled by a single power; the Suez Canal required international operation. Prime Minister Eden and Premier Mollet were exhilarated by this revelation that the Panama Canal was simply a back country creek.

Never was Anglo-French-American solidarity so high!

In the short space of two months all this has changed. The commercial press in Britain denounces Mr. Dulles. Cartoonists depict him as a "crazy mixed-up corporation lawyer." He is accused of attempting to "sell Britain down the Suez Canal." Unidentified officials in the Foreign Office hint at "double-deal-

ing." Foreign correspondents in Britain talk of a growing "anti-Americanism" in the upper echelons.

French Foreign Minister Pineau told the French National Assembly: "It is very difficult to follow exactly the line of American foreign policy."

The trouble, it would seem, is vacillation.

Outwardly, Dulles' conduct in the Suez crisis does seem like vacillation. When the crisis broke, Dulles opposed unilateral action by Britain and France and urged concerted pressure by all principal users of the Canal. Britain and France agreed. They counted on greater strength in forcing the issue once Egypt rejected the "reasonable" proposals of the principal users.

When the Menzies mission failed, as all the world knew it would, the Tories and the Mollet government resumed threats of war. Again Dulles intervened with a substitute proposal—formation of a Canal Users Association. Once again Downing Street and the Quai agreed. They were led to believe that it would be the instrumentality for a quick and dramatic showdown with Nasser based on an American-subsidized boycott of the Canal. But once the Users Association was in the works it turned out that there would be no subsidy from the United States. Hence, no boycott. American pilots were granted passports to work in the Canal.

Then, on October 2nd, came the

unkindest cut of all. Heretofore, Mr. Dulles had gone to great lengths to endorse the current euphemism that the Suez crisis was simply a dispute over an international waterway. In a press conference that day, he talked of it in the context of American policy on colonial issues. It was then that the heavens fell in Britain.

Up to that point, Mr. Dulles had made a great display of solidarity with the British and French colonialists in the Suez crisis. At the press conference he referred to the "somewhat independent role" which America seeks to play in relation to the colonies. And the earth shook. For this was not simply a breach of solidarity with Britain and France. It was an oblique advertisement that Wall Street was prepared to do a "somewhat independent business" with President Nasser at the expense of Britain and France.

To play this "somewhat independent role" calls for adroitness. The tide of colonial empire is ebbing. Crossing it are the strong winds of national liberation. The State Department's problem is to facilitate the exit of empire and the entry of Wall Street amid the swirling counter-pressures of wind and tide—and oil. To succeed in this, one must do considerable backing and filling. That is what Mr. Dulles has been doing. And he has been doing it without the slightest vacillation of purpose. Stated baldly, this purpose is *to move in on the Suez Canal*.

Recall Iran. For years, the major

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American oil companies looked hungrily at the rich British-controlled Iranian oil fields. In August 1951, the government of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh nationalized the oil industry. The British closed their Abadan refineries, withdrew their technicians, and set out deliberately to force Iran into bankruptcy in order to bring it to terms. They failed in this. But they did succeed in organizing the overthrow of the Mossadegh government. At this point five major U.S. oil companies stepped into the picture. Herbert Hoover, Jr., on behalf of the American oil interests, undertook to negotiate with Britain and Iran. When the smoke of negotiations had cleared in the summer of 1954, the Iranian government had signed a contract which leased its nationalized oil fields to eight foreign oil companies. The U.S. companies got 40 per cent; Anglo-Iranian 40 per cent; Royal Dutch Shell, working closely with the American companies, 15 per cent; and certain French interests got 6 per cent. The American oil trust had finally cut itself in on the Iranian oil fields, heretofore an exclusively British domain.

This advanced a process which, in one form or another, has been under way for more than a decade. When World War II ended, British companies controlled nearly 50 per cent of all Middle East oil resources. Today they hold on to less than 30 per cent. By contrast, American oil companies today control 60 per cent of all Middle East oil.

What more natural, once Egypt unexpectedly nationalized the Suez Canal, than for closely related American oil and shipping interests to envisage a duplication of the Iranian experience?

On October 4th, the *New York Times* reported that a number of American shipping companies were projecting the formation of a cartel which would invest in the Canal. "Their project," said the *Times*, "is similar to the one by which a consortium of United States and British oil companies came to terms with Iran on oil exploitation in 1954."

The big push is on. The French and British governments are fully conscious of what is happening. So much so that Foreign Minister Pineau referred to this plan in his speech to the National Assembly on October 16th: "French public opinion," he said, "would not understand if the Suez Canal Co. were replaced purely and simply by an American company."

Does this mean that the French interests which control more than half of the shares in the Canal—the rest being held by British interests—are ready to replace the Suez Canal Co. by a firm which would not be, as it is now, purely and simply Anglo-French? Probably, if absolutely necessary, for half a loaf is better than none.

Will the Egyptian government agree? That remains to be seen. Egypt is not Iran. Nasser cannot be overthrown as easily as Dr. Mossadegh was. And unlike the Iranian

oil fields, the Suez Canal dispute, involving the interests of all nations which depend on Suez shipping, has brought into play powerful forces which will support Egypt, like the Soviet Union and India. If the Egyptian government remains firm there need be no repetition of the Iranian formula.

H-BOMB AND A NEW AMERICA

Pre-election commentaries have a short life span. They make remarkably indifferent reading once the polls have closed. It is, nevertheless, quite certain that comment on at least two issues will be timely whatever the outcome in November. Both issues were raised by Adlai Stevenson. One is his proposal for agreement with the Soviet Union and Britain on prohibition of further H-bomb tests. The other is his projection of a New America.

Apparently unrelated, they have a common nourishment in the popular mood which has evolved since the conference at the summit in Geneva. It is a mood of eagerness to consummate the promise of peaceful co-existence by breaking the stalemate of foreign policy and by moving upward from the plateau of social advance upon which we have largely rested since the New Deal.

In 1955, the prospect of H-bomb war generated such horror that the pressures for a meeting at the summit became irresistible. All human-

ity breathed a sigh of relief when Eisenhower publicly renounced the threat of war and simultaneously expressed confidence in the sincerity of the Soviet government's desire for peace.

The spirit of Geneva became a universal solvent in which the anxieties of the people melted away. It also acted as a catalyst speeding up processes at work even before Geneva. Open and crude propaganda for war has practically disappeared from America's press and airways. Barriers to east-west trade are crumbling everywhere. Normal patterns of national intercourse between east and west are re-emerging. The cold war is coming to an end. Much of its superstructure has already been dismantled.

But with the dissolution of anxieties, popular pressures for the settlement of differences diminished. As a result, post-Geneva negotiations on disarmament and relations with People's China ended in deadlock. The situation in Germany, Korea and Indo-China remained stalemated. Our government tabled indefinitely the unfinished business of Geneva.

Into this perspective of deadlock, a sudden dread was injected. It became widely known that the human race was threatened with global genocide should H-bomb tests continue to pollute the atmosphere with the radio-active poison of hydrogen fall-out.

Once again, as before Geneva, the anxious voice of the people began to be heard. It was articulated

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by scientists, doctors, religious leaders, thoughtful citizens from all walks of life. It was finally formulated as an issue of national policy by Stevenson. It is bound to dominate the national consciousness no matter how the elections turn out.

To talk of the deeper significance of Stevenson's proposal would be fatuous. Nothing is more significant than the perpetuation of mankind, of its rescue from degenerative mutation. But there is a collateral significance which merits attention. For Stevenson's proposal to ban H-bomb tests is the first suggestion by a political leader of national stature that we break out of the area of stalemate. It focuses attention on the need for new initiative by our country, on the abandonment of deadlocks as the outer limit of our foreign policy. We are in transition from a period of cold war to an era of peaceful co-existence. To move fully into this era we must complete the unfinished business of Geneva.

The ending of the cold war is beginning to re-cast the outlook of the American people. The prospect of peaceful co-existence, the potentials of automation and the atomic age, the new strength of the organized labor and Negro people's movements—all have combined to nurture thoughts of new social advance. Stevenson's campaign slogan "A New America" takes cognizance of this developing national mood. Whatever happens to Stevenson or his slogan this temper of the people will

persist and will shape all future developments.

To move forward, America must take up where the New Deal left off.

The New Deal ended with our entry into World War II. Its demise was announced by President Roosevelt when he declared that "Dr. New Deal would be replaced by Dr. Win the War." The government's business was to be warfare, not welfare. Labor subordinated itself to this conception. It pressed for no social advance; it policed equality of sacrifice.

The war's end energized labor's dominant resolve to move ahead. Amidst the turbulence of post-war economic struggles, it shaped directions for a new forward movement: a national unemployment act, guaranteed annual wage, Wagner-Murray-Dingell social security bill, federal FEPC legislation, etc.

President Truman replaced Dr. Win the War with Dr. Cold War. Labor accepted this change. It fought Communism instead of monopoly; its forward movement dissolved.

Monopoly, strengthened by the war, launched an all-out assault against the achievements of the New Deal. But despite its increased domination of the country, the monopolies were unable to destroy organically the reforms of the New Deal. Even the Cadillac Cabinet was forced to accept their major outlines and content itself with holding improvements to a minimum, chipping away where it could, sabotaging

through administrative controls.

This 15-year arrest of social reform has accumulated a tremendous backlog of unfulfilled social needs. As we move into a period of peaceful co-existence, labor is beginning to take stock of this backlog, for the first time in a decade and a half, without either war time inhibition or cold war disorientation. The liberating effect of this new context is enhanced by labor's newly achieved unity and peak strength. Impulses for an advance along a broad front are building up in labor's ranks and among our people generally. Whatever the outcome of the elections, labor and the people will surely fight to bring a New America into existence.

STAROBIN'S PROPOSALS

In its August 25th issue *The Nation* carried a bleak letter by Joseph Starobin, former *Daily Worker* foreign correspondent, about the Communist Party and its prospects. The letter, in which Starobin publicly dissociates himself from the Communist Party, outlines some rather nebulous perspectives for building a new socialist movement in the United States, to "supersede the Communist Party."

It is regrettable that Starobin left the Party. He is an able journalist with an imaginative and perceptive grasp of unfolding events.

I hope that the conflict of views between Starobin and the Communist Party on some rather basic

matters will not preclude at least a certain degree of fruitful collaboration where identity of outlook still prevails or where it may emerge in the days ahead. In the meantime, a discussion of Starobin's differences with the Party is in order.

Starobin thinks the Communist Party is finished. In it, he sees mainly "victims," "casualties," and impotence. This rather nihilist picture does not convey any appreciation of the dynamics of the present situation in the Party. Reflect on the framework within which Starobin undertakes to place his analysis: what it takes to generate a socialist revival! Is this not something relatively new? When did the Left consider this meaningful before? Not at any time, certainly, since the Cold War.

This outlook has now opened for the Left because of the termination of the Cold War. One period has come to an end; another is getting under way. There is not yet thunder on the Left; but there is new stirring. Hopeful events impend. A socialist revival has been made possible by the way things are going in our country and in the world.

The Communist Party fought bravely to help shape what is now taking on recognizable features. It is summing up the lessons of a ten-year struggle to help bring about what is finally at hand. It faces up soberly to the knowledge that its losses and set-backs were heavy and largely of its own making. A discussion of unprecedented vigor animates

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it from top to bottom. Creative energies, long repressed, burst into the open as the past is reviewed, the future probed, the present made preface.

It is a painful and anguished discussion. The emotions which accompany it testify to its depth. Those who are engaged in it will never again be as they were. People are being remade, not only ideas.

But Starobin misses this entirely. He sees only the victims, the casualties, the disabled. And from this he concludes that the Party does not have what it takes.

This is based on a rather strange analysis of the leaders and members of the Communist Party. Of the leaders he says: "Many now realize that the whole perspective was faulty, but they appear to be impotent to put their ideas into practice." As for the membership, Starobin divides them into two categories:

Many rank and file members have been cut off from the country's productive process. . . . Some of these people are aging, and they subsist on loyalties and memories which are not easily dissolved. There is a substantial group, however, perhaps several thousands more, which had begun to come to terms with themselves and with realities quite a while before last February. . . . They cannot alter the Party as such, neither can they dissolve it.

In short, those in the leadership and membership who do not understand the Party's predicament are hopeless; those who do are impotent. With such an estimate, natur-

ally enough, Starobin concludes that American Communists do not have what it takes to generate a socialist revival.

Starobin's letter was written prior to publication of the National Committee's Draft Resolution. This Resolution, which takes into account months of discussion by the membership, is animated with the spirit of change and the deliberate quest for new answers to meet the new times. It is the most incisive refutation of Starobin's opinion that the leaders and members of the Communist Party are impotent to put their ideas into practice. The discussion of the Resolution which is now beginning to get under way will further demonstrate the ability of the membership and leadership to alter their organization in keeping with the needs of American Socialism.

Starobin's misjudgment of the Party's vitality implies a strange view of the nature of the Communist Party. It can only be reconciled with an assumption that there is something built into the Communist Party which tends to put certain limits to its possibility for self-correction, that the Communist Party might suffer the same fate as, for example, befell the Socialist Labor Party. But there is a fundamental difference between the character of the Communist Party and all preceding working-class parties with whose corpses the American radical scene is strewn.

No working-class party, including

the Communist Party, can guarantee against mistakes. But the capacity of other parties for self-correction is always limited in the last analysis by the inherent defects of their fundamental principles. Therefore, the possibility is always inherent that, at one point or another, they may not be able to transcend these limitations. These do not exist in the principles on which the Communist Party is based, because they *require* creative and evolving interpretation and application. The inner Party struggle over policy, which life itself generates, must, therefore, lead in time to the ultimate correction of mistakes.

That is exactly what took place in the Communist Party, although one would not gather so from Starobin's letter. There it appears that the Party persisted in its mistakes for ten years despite a growing realization by certain individuals that many important policies were wrong. Actually, the process of self-correction did not begin this past February. The Party itself—and not merely some individuals—began re-appraising its sectarian estimates and tactics in the winter of 1952-53. The first evidence of this was the resolution on the outcome of the 1952 elections. This process is culminating in, not beginning with, the present discussion.

Starobin proposes that the new movement should not be a political party or even a political action association. His view is that it should

be an educational organization devoted to stimulating controversy. This makes it clear that Starobin not only rejects the Communist Party. He rejects the principle itself of a working class Marxist political party. What he actually proposes is a Fabian-type of socialist propaganda organization.

It is difficult to believe that this is offered seriously as the instrumentality for generating a socialist revival in America. To reject the concept of a Marxist political party—whatever its name or electoral form—represents not a step forward for the socialist movement, but a retrograde step.

Starobin insists that such a movement must be formed without the Communists. The prohibition is, in my opinion, superfluous. It is hard to conceive of Communists clamoring to form it if it is intended to "supersede" the Communist Party. If it is ever formed it might serve as a useful addition to the family of socialist organizations and, as such, Communists would undoubtedly welcome it as they would any socialist-discussion group. But it cannot "supersede" the Communist Party.

The Communist Party needs to be neither dissolved nor "superseded." It needs to be changed in the direction indicated by the Draft Resolution. When that is done, it will play a vital role in helping generate a socialist revival in America.

October 20, 1956.

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By V

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Unpublished Letters on the National Question*

By V. I. Lenin

IT SEEMS I am very much to blame before the workers of Russia for not intervening with sufficient energy and sufficient sharpness in the notorious question of autonomization,** officially designated it seems, as the question of the union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In the summer, when this question emerged, I was sick and, then, in the autumn, I entertained high hopes for the recovery of my health, and also hoped that the October and December plenums would give me

the possibility of intervening in this question. But meanwhile, neither at the October plenum (the plenum on this question) nor at the December plenum was I able to attend and hence the question passed me by almost completely.

I succeeded only in having a discussion with comrade Dzerzhinsky, who came from the Caucasus and related to me how the question stood in Georgia. I was also able to exchange a couple of words with Comrade Zinoviev and expressed to him my fears on the score of this question. From what was told me by Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who headed the commission sent by the Central Committee for the "investigation" of the Georgian incident, I derive only the greatest fears. If things have come to the point where Ordzhonikidze goes to the extreme of applying physical force, about which Comrade Dzerzhinsky told me, then I can imagine into what a terrible mess we have landed ourselves. It is clear that this venture into "autonomization" was basically wrong and untimely.

They say that there must be unity

* These letters were published in *The Communist* (Moscow), No. 9, 1956; the translation used here is by Stewart Smith of the (Canadian) *National Affairs*.

** "Autonomization"—This is the idea of the unification of the soviet republics through their entrance into the Russian Federation of Soviet Socialist Republics on the basis of autonomy. This idea was the basis of the "Draft Resolution on the mutual relation of the RFSSR with the independent republics," proposed by J. V. Stalin and adopted in September 1922 by the commission of the Central Committee. In a letter of Sept. 27, 1922, addressed to the members of the Political Bureau, Lenin subjected this draft to serious criticism. He proposed a different solution on the question in principle—the voluntary union of all soviet republics, including the Russian, in a new state creation, the Union of Soviet Republics, on the basis of their full equality. "We," wrote Lenin, "recognize ourselves to be equal with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and others, and together and on an equal level with them, we enter into a new union, a new federation. . . ." On Dec. 30, 1922, the first all-union congress of Soviets took the historic decision on the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. (Note in original article)

of the state apparatus. From where does this belief come? Did it not come from the very same Russian state apparatus which, as I already pointed out in one of the past numbers of our journal, was taken over by us from tsarism and which has only reconciled itself to a slight degree to the soviet world?

Undoubtedly it would be wise to wait with this measure until such time as we can answer for the state apparatus as our own. But at the present time we must in honesty say in reply, that we designate as our apparatus one which, in reality, through and through is foreign to us still and which is a bourgeois and tsarist mishmash. There was no possibility whatever of eliminating this apparatus in five years in the absence of help from other countries and when we were completely preoccupied with the war and the struggle against famine.

Under such conditions it is very natural that "*the freedom of secession from the union,*" with which we justified ourselves, turned out to be an empty piece of paper incapable of defending the alien nationalities from the encroachments of that "true" Russian, the great-Russian, the chauvinist, in essence, a scoundrel and rapist. Such is the typical Russian bureaucrat. There is no doubt that an infinitesimal percentage of soviet and sovietized workers will be drawn into this sea of chauvinist, great-Russian riff-raff as flies into milk.

They say in defense of this measure that people's commissariats have been picked out directly concerned with national psychology and education in the national sphere. But here the question is, is it possible to pick out these people's commissariats fully, and the second question, did we take measures with sufficient concern to defend people of the alien nationalities from the "true" Russian bullies. I don't think we took such measures although they could and should have been taken.

I think that here a fatal role was played by Stalin's haste and his passion for administration and also his bitterness towards ill-famed "*social-nationalism.*" Bitterness, in general, usually plays in politics a very harmful role.

I am afraid, also, that Comrade Dzerzhinsky who went to the Caucasus to investigate the case of the "*crimes*" of these "social-nationals," is distinguished here by his pro-Russian tendency (it is well known that a Russified foreign-born person always overdoes it in proving himself to be pro-Russian) and that the impartiality of his whole commission is sufficiently characterized by the heavy fist that Orzhonikidze brought to it. I think that no provocations and not even outrages could justify his heavy Russian fist and that comrade Dzerzhinsky is irrevocably to blame for allowing himself to use the heavy hand in a light-minded way.

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in relation to all other citizens of the Caucasus. Orzhonokidze did not have the right to be so short-tempered as he and Dzerzhinsky allowed themselves to be. On the contrary, Orzhonokidze was obligated to conduct himself with great restraint, which could not be expected from an ordinary citizen, much less from those charged with "political" crimes. But speaking frankly, isn't it true that the social-nationals are citizens charged with political crimes and the *only point to it is the charge itself*?

Here arises an important principle question: how do we understand internationalism?

Dec. 30, 1922

LENIN

* * *

I have written in my work on the national question that it is never wise to make an abstract postulation of the question of nationalism in general. It is necessary to distinguish the nationalism of the oppressing nation and the nationalism of the oppressed nation, the nationalism of the big nation and the nationalism of the small nation.

In relation to the second nationalism, almost always in historical practice, we, the nationals of a big nation, are to blame for the endless violence and even more than that—we commit endless acts of violence and outrages that go unnoticed. I need only recall my days on the Volga where other nationalities were

insulted, Poles were called "*polyaks*," Tartars and Ukrainians were called by insulting nicknames and the same for Georgians and others from the different nationalities of the Caucasus.

For this reason, internationalism on the side of the oppressing or so-called "*great*" nation (although great only in its violence, great only in the sense of brutality) must consist not only in observing the formal equality of nations, but also in such inequality as will make up on the side of the oppressing nation, the big nation, for the inequality which in fact arises in life. Whoever does not understand this does not really understand the proletarian attitude to the national question. He has remained essentially at the point of view of the petty-bourgeoisie and therefore cannot but slide down to the bourgeois viewpoint continuously.

What is the important point for the proletariat? For the proletariat it is not only important but basically necessary to ensure the maximum confidence in the proletarian class struggle on the part of the alien nationalities. What is needed for this? For this, not only formal equality is necessary. For this it is necessary to make up one way or another in one's attitude and readiness to make concessions in relation to the alien nationalities for the lack of confidence, suspicion and hurts, which in the historical past have been inflicted upon them by the government

of the "great-power" nation.

I think that for Bolsheviks, for Communists it is unnecessary to elaborate this further. And I think that in the given instance, in relation to the Georgian nation, we have a typical example where particular care, foresight and willingness to make concessions is demanded on our side *for a genuine proletarian position on this case*. A Georgian, who takes a scornful attitude towards this side of the matter, who scornfully flings out the charge of "social-nationalism" (when he himself in reality is not only a "social-nationalist," but an uncouth great-Russian bully), such a Georgian, in essence, damages the interests of proletarian class solidarity, because nothing blocks the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice, and to nothing are national "feelings" so sensitive as to the infringement of national equality, even though due to carelessness, even though in the nature of a joke, and especially to the infringement of national equality by one's proletarian comrades. That is why in the present instance, it is better to overdo it on the side of a willingness to make concessions and mild treatment of the national minority than not to go far enough. That is why in the present instance the basic interests of proletarian solidarity and consequently of the proletarian class struggle, demand that we never adopt a formal attitude to the national question, but

always study the essential differences in the relations of the proletariat to the oppressed (or small) nation and to the oppressing (or big) nation.

Dec. 31, 1922

LENIN

* * *

What are the practical measures that should be adopted under the situation that has been created?

First, the union of socialist republics should be upheld and strengthened; there can be no doubt about this measure. It is necessary for us and for the world communist proletariat in the struggle with the world bourgeoisie and for defense from their intrigues.

Second, it is necessary to retain the union of socialist republics in relation to the state diplomatic apparatus. The point is that this apparatus is entirely part of our government apparatus. In it we did not admit a single man of any influence from the old tsarist apparatus. The entire authoritative part of this apparatus is composed of communists. Therefore this apparatus has already won for itself (this can be said boldly) the name of being a proven communist apparatus, cleaned of the old tsarist, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois apparatus to an incomparably greater degree than the apparatus we have been compelled to get along with in the other people's commissariats.

Third, it is necessary to punish Comrade Orzhonokidze, making an

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example of him, (I am extremely sorry to say this as I count myself among his friends and worked with him abroad), but also it is necessary to complete the inquiry or to investigate again all the material of the Dzerzhinsky commission with the purpose of correcting that tremendous mass of inaccuracies and unfair judgments which are undoubtedly to be found there. Politically responsible for all this really great-Russian nationalistic campaign are, of course, Stalin and Dzerzhinsky.

Fourth, it is necessary to bring in a strict rule regarding the use of national languages in republics of different nationalities, belonging to our union, and to enforce this rule with special thoroughness. There is no doubt that on the pretext of the unity of railway services, the pretext of fiscal unity and so on, we will have under our present apparatus a mass of evil practices of a Russian-chauvinist character. For the struggle against these evils special resourcefulness will be necessary, not to speak even of the special sincerity of those whose mission it will be to take part in this struggle. In this respect a detailed legal code is demanded, which can be composed with some degree of success only by nationals living in the given republics. In this regard, we should by no means commit ourselves beforehand not to return back at the next Soviet Congress, i.e., retain the union of Soviet socialist republics only in departments of war and diplomacy,

but in all other relations to restore fully independent, separate peoples' commissariats.

It is necessary to have in view that the dividing up of the government departments and the lack of co-ordination between their work in relation to Moscow and other centres can be overcome sufficiently by party authority, if it is used with sufficient circumspection and impartiality; the harm for our government which can spring from the absence of a united apparatus of the nationalities with the Russian apparatus is incomparably less, infinitely less, than the harm which will otherwise arise not only for us but for the whole international, for hundreds of millions of people of Asia, who are about to enter the proscenium of history, following after us. It would be unpardonable opportunism if on the eve of this entrance of the East onto the stage of history and at the outset of its awakening, we were to undermine our authority among them even by the smallest rudeness or injustice in relation to our own alien nationalities. The necessity of solidarity against the imperialists of the West, defending the capitalist world, is one thing. On this there can be no doubt and it is superfluous for me to say that I unconditionally approve these measures. It is another thing when we ourselves fall, even in small matters, into an imperialist relation to oppressed peoples, undermining by this completely all our principled sincerity, all our prin-

ciplined defence of the struggle with imperialism. But tomorrow in world history will be precisely that day when finally there will spring forth the awakening of the peoples oppres-

sed by imperialism and when there will commence the decisive, long and heavy battle for their emancipation.

Dec. 31, 1922

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A Discussion With Critics

By Herbert Aptheker

THERE HAS BEEN, in recent months, widespread discussion concerning the past, present and future of the American Communist Party. This has been especially marked, of course, among its members, but thousands of non-Communists have also participated in this re-assessment. We propose, in this article, to examine briefly the nature of this latter re-assessment, as it reflects itself in published sources.

Among established organs of conservative opinion, like the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune*, the Party remains the epitome of everything evil. It is true that in these publications, from time to time, there have appeared some rather anxious paragraphs concerning reports of fresh breezes in the Communist movement here and abroad, but the line is taken that these are purely demagogic, and that the Devil remains quite as Satanic as his nature requires. Recently, the *New York Times* editorially summed up its view as follows (Oct. 4, 1956):

Intellectually the Communist Party is bankrupt. Its record makes it impossible that it should ever again com-

mand the support of any significant group of Americans or play a serious role in the dynamic development of our society.

Others, while vehemently anti-Communist, take a different tack in the discussion, and view the evidence of change in the Communist movement with more seriousness. Characteristic of this group is the opinion of Mr. Michael Harrington, as expressed in the Catholic weekly, *The Commonweal* (July 13, 1956). In an essay entitled, "New Communist Line," Mr. Harrington reiterates his, and the magazine's, position: "It is impossible for democrats to cooperate with the Communist Party"; "cooperation with Communists remains as impossible as ever." The impossibility derives, according to him, from the fact that we Communists are in a pact with evil itself, are lost souls; we, and our Party, "are so tightly bound to Moscow that they quite literally *cannot* be transformed."

"Nevertheless," Mr. Harrington continues, "the changes which have taken place" in the Communist movement, "may well make this

Popular Front line all the more seductive," a phrase repeated three times in two pages.

To resist seduction Mr. Harrington advocates liberalism in domestic policies and anti-colonialism in foreign affairs; at the same time and for the same purpose he urges "a principled defense of the rights" of Communists. Yet, in his conclusion, Mr. Harrington finds that Communism "is irrelevant to civil liberties, to the labor movement, to the Negro struggle"; that "it is really a foreign phenomenon."

I do not believe that the program which Mr. Harrington advocates—and which any Communist would wholeheartedly support—has so strong and well organized a backing that it can afford, *in its own interests*, to rule out arbitrarily whatever assistance Communists might bring to its realization. Moreover, the process of such summary banning necessitates some kind of "loyalty-screening" and some kind of censorship, both on the right to speak and the right to hear, which, no matter how administered, is stultifying.

Furthermore, the anti-Communist policy of Mr. Harrington itself impedes the implementation of the excellent domestic and foreign program he endorses. This is so because it is flatly untrue to make of Communism a "foreign" movement; it is at once universal and indigenous. It appeared throughout the capitalist world long before the Soviet Union

existed, and it never has been the creature of anything since. While the relations of parties to parties, and especially the relationship with the Communist Party of the USSR, was one-sided—which hurt both sides—it was never the conspiratorial instrumentality of alien fiends, and increasingly the relationship is being placed upon a fully fraternal and equal basis.

It is, moreover, not true that Communism is irrelevant to civil liberties and the labor movement and the Negro struggle, as the history of all three, from free speech fights, to the organization of the CIO, to the Scottsboro campaign—to name nothing else—makes absolutely clear.

Because these assertions are basic to Mr. Harrington's case, and are not true, his case collapses *in its own terms*. It is quite contradictory to advocate "a principled defense" of the rights of Communists and simultaneously insist that they are diabolical foreign agents whose activities are irrelevant to civil liberties and the struggles of the working class and the Negro people. The latter characterization tends to negate the former proposal, to justify the grossest violations of the Bill of Rights, and to serve as the essential justification for the crassest kind of McCarthyism—as loathsome to Mr. Harrington as to the Communists.

More helpful, I think, is the spirit which pervades the recent writings of another non-Communist who has

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been impressed with the re-examination and the changes going on in the Communist movement. I have reference to the venerable A. J. Muste, leader of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and a founder of the new magazine, *Liberation*.

In a pamphlet written by him and just published by that magazine (*Where Are We Now?*), Mr. Muste says he is heartened by the "new developments in the Communist Party" and feels that these suggest "at least the possibility of the healing or the dissipation of the split in labor and progressive forces." This position leads him, unlike Mr. Harrington, to a fully consistent stand on the civil liberties question. He wants the views of all to be aired and sees in such a common and friendly pooling of ideas and suggestions the most efficient way of hammering out a program for progressive social activity. He insists that all must be heard and must be heard publicly, the only proviso being that the participants "want to discuss issues in a spirit which provides for hard-hitting intellectual presentation but excludes rancor and personal vituperation."

* * *

There is also a significant body of opinion, among liberal, progressive and generally Left circles in our country, which holds that the Communist Party is an obstacle to democratic progress and therefore should be dissolved. The precise details of the indictment from this group dif-

fer—some hold the leadership to be completely inept or totally incapable of really independent thought; some feel the membership itself has been robotized and incurably "brainwashed," etc.—but its essential nature is that the Party is hopelessly sectarian and irrevocably estranged from the sympathy and comprehension of the mass of American people.

Let us offer summaries of the most widely circulated expressions of such points of view. In *The Nation* of July 28, Mr. George Benjamin of San Francisco, in a communication filled with transparently intense passion and concern, finds that the Party "leadership now confesses itself blind, slavish and cowardly." While there has been, in my view, excessive self-flagellation in the Marxist press, I do not think it is accurate to declare that the leadership has found itself to be blind, slavish and cowardly. But that is unimportant in terms of conveying Mr. Benjamin's ideas; clearly *he* thinks that such adjectives accurately describe the leadership of the American Communist movement—union official, feels that "the chief disservice which the Communist Party has done to the American people has been to deprive it of a radical leadership."

Becoming more specific, Benjamin reports the Communists guilty of arrogance and snobbishness, carrying with them "the posture of foreign visitors with a

mission." The Party, he writes, has been "unable to adapt itself to or understand the changing times and the special characteristics of American capitalism in its post-war phase"; it has been "anti-intellectual . . . in its rigidity and its rejection of every other school of thought" and has been "consistently unable to use intelligently" its own system of thought, dialectical materialism.

Consistent with such a finding as to the Party's contributions and character in the past decade, Mr. Benjamin concludes by urging, in the name of democratic advance and human well-being, that the Communist Party dissolve.

The editors of *Monthly Review*, Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, in their July-August issue, take a not dissimilar view, though their mode of expression is somewhat less vehement and more tentative than that of Mr. Benjamin. They find that momentous worldwide changes have altered "the central task of socialist parties (including CPs)," which no longer is that of "defense of the Soviet Union and/or postponement of war between the [capitalist and socialist] systems." Now, they write, the central task for all such parties is Socialism. This means each party must map out its own path to Socialism, they continue, "and only a party capable of thinking for itself and prepared to follow up the implications of its own analysis can hope to solve these problems successfully." Of this, Messrs.

Huberman and Sweezy feel members of the Communist Party are incapable. They do note—and welcome—an atmosphere of "freer discussion among American Communists," but their prognosis, put forward somewhat tentatively, is that American Communists are really incapable of independent and creative thought and that, therefore, the Communist Party will (and should) die.

Other liberal commentators have said very much the same thing, though often their language is less restrained. I. F. Stone, for example, in his *Weekly*, says American Communists are "idiots" and "cowards," and urges "the Left to break away from all Communist influence and strike out a new path determined in each country by its own conditions and traditions." Sidney Lens, a well-known author, and Chicago trade-union official, feels that "the tragedy of America is that it has no genuine Left" and that "The Communist movement has disoriented our Left," (*The Progressive*, October, 1956).

I think Mr. Lens is somewhat one-sided to place the entire onus of the American Left's disorientation upon the Communist Party, and that Mr. Stone chooses vivacity rather than veracity in characterizing Communists as idiots and cowards.

I find, also, serious inconsistencies in the more extended argumentations of other commentators.

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over thirty years "the Communists have had a practical monopoly of American radicalism" (an overstatement, in my view) and that they have played a positive role "in publicizing and winning support for many causes, from Sacco-Vanzetti and the Scottsboro boys to the building of the CIO . . . in the long fight for labor's rights, for unemployment insurance, against discrimination and the like." Furthermore, Mr. Benjamin writes:

There are many besides the Communists who recognize the dangers in the deterioration of civil liberties. There are many indeed, in addition to the Communists, who want to eradicate from our public life the influence of such as Eastland, Walter, McCarthy, Nixon and Dulles. There are many who see more clearly than do the Communists the corruption of our society, the degeneration of our democracy, the despoliation of our free-thinking and free-swinging traditions.

Is this the record of a blind, slavish and cowardly organization or leadership? Even assuming the fullest accuracy to every stricture hurled against the Party by Mr. Benjamin—its rigidity, its dogmatism, its sectarianism, its arrogance—does his own picture of its notable role in the past and its fundamentally salutary program in the present, justify the demand for its dissolution? Mr. Benjamin, in condemning the Party, nevertheless uses it as the standard with which to compare the position of others vis-a-vis civil liberties, Mc-

Carthyism, and anti-democratic tendencies in general; is this a logical foundation making persuasive the plea for the Party's dissolution?

Joseph Starobin in *The Nation* of August 25, presents a picture of the negative features of the Party in terms similar to that offered by Mr. Benjamin. But, after declaring that these features make the Party incapable of further contributions to the cause of Socialism and that it should therefore be dissolved, he nevertheless remarks that "there is a substantial group," within the Party, "perhaps several thousand" who are carrying on excellent work in their respective spheres. He does not indicate that the good they admittedly do may have *some* connection with their Party membership; no, only harmful functioning of Party members is due to the Party; beneficial functioning exists despite the Party. I do not find the logic of this very compelling and certainly Mr. Starobin offers nothing to substantiate this crucial point.

Yet, he is sure that these people "cannot alter the Party as such," but he does not say why. Mr. Starobin is confident of the possibility of changing the social structure of the United States from a capitalist to a socialist one; but he is sure that several thousand members, functioning well, in an organization totaling twenty thousand, will not find it possible to change their own organization. Once again, the logic here is inconsistent rather than per-

suasive and Mr. Starobin offers nothing to convince on this point, also crucial to his argument.

Mr. Huberman and Mr. Sweezy, in the editorial to which I have already referred, find the Party ill-equipped to face what they feel are quite new requirements arising out of a new situation, as they see things. That is, they feel that we are now living in an era of peaceful co-existence and that in such an era the central tasks of the previous period, which they themselves define as the defense of the Soviet Union and the battle against world war, are no longer basic. Yet they offer nothing more convincing than "a conviction, which has been growing on us for a long time now" that while the Party did respond with some competence to the basic tasks of the previous epoch, it is incapable of the necessary self-adjustment to make itself a helpful instrumentality in the present period. Happily, unlike Starobin and Benjamin, the editors of the *Monthly Review* do hold out the possibility of their being wrong, and do not, therefore, take it upon themselves to actually call for the Party's suicide.

In sum, I find nothing in the substance of any of the arguments hitherto put forward, by avowed friends of Socialism and of progressive social change, to convince me that either end would be advanced by the dissolution of the Communist Party. I think advocates of such a change are required to muster

very compelling reasons indeed. A friend of the cause of civil liberties and Negro freedom, of social security and working-class organization, of colonial liberation and peace, is compelled to bring forward really convincing and clear reasons for the dissolution of an organization which, for nearly forty years, has battled for the same ends, an organization in which splendid men and women have devoted endless hours of selfless and heroic labors. Such a friend is particularly obliged to *prove* his case for dissolution if his alternatives are exceedingly nebulous or speculative, as they have been up to now.

Above all, it seems to me, the advocate of the dissolution of the Communist Party must not get himself into the position of insisting that such dissolution is a prerequisite for the forward march of the progressive cause; nor must he put himself in the position of denying the Communist the freedom of *not* dissolving his Party, under the penalty of ostracism should he so choose.

* * *

The fact is that the era of the world-wide transition from capitalism to Socialism—which is the era in which we live—raises questions and problems that are as imposing as they are new. The fact is that the transition from feudalism to capitalism was quite prolonged and far from smooth; the qualitative change from capitalism to Socialism is greater. It is now apparent, I think, that

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while the movement may not be as prolonged it will not be any simpler or smoother. It is apparent, too, that the full impact in human terms of the meaning of the observation that it is people raised under capitalism who must themselves create Socialism, is becoming clearer than it was some years back.

The problems posed by this historic movement face all of us who favor Socialism. However we envisaged the change in the past, or envisage it today, whatever differences existed or exist, we must consciously seek to submerge them in the common and crucial task of finding our way, together, in the present, to create as magnificent a future as we can—one which, we may even be permitted to hope, we may yet enjoy together.

Everywhere, the necessity for thorough-going re-examination of basic ideas and of ingrained practices, is being more and more widely acknowledged. Such a process is difficult and necessarily painful and will be conducted at different paces in differing places and by differing peoples. But the process is inexorable and is manifestly going on. The need for this is great among Communists. I say this unequivocally as one who is a Communist. I think the need for this is great among non-Communists, too, who also want an end to colonialism, to racism, to exploitation and to capitalism.

Evidences of the critical re-thinking among friends of Socialism are

everywhere. Thus, the dean of European Social-Democrats, Camille Huysmans—Secretary of the pre-1914 Socialist International and presently Socialist Speaker of the Belgian House of Commons—just recently replied in a warm manner to the call for fraternal unity from R. Palme Dutt, a leader of the British Communist Party. G. D. H. Cole, outstanding British Socialist and one of the most eminent historians in the world, has expressed his fervent wish for an end to the breach that has divided Socialist and Communist advocates of Socialism; R. H. S. Crossman, another outstanding figure in the history of British Socialism, more recently has seconded Mr. Cole's appeal. The Socialist Union of Great Britain, in a stimulating study, *Twentieth Century Socialism* (Penguin Books, 1956), attempts a "re-thinking of Socialism" and insists that British Socialists must never allow themselves "to become the slave of doctrine." The leader of the British Labor Party, Hugh Gaitskell, in a pamphlet just published (*Socialism and Nationalization*), takes a fresh and very critical look at basic elements in his own Party's program.

Re-examination is the order of the day among all Italians who want Socialism from Saragat's Social Democrats to Nenni's Socialists to Togliatti's Communists. That the results so far have been in the direction of more creativity by all and resulting greater unity is apparent

from the remarks of Ignazio Silone, an author of *The God That Failed* and hitherto one of the most bitter of Italian anti-Communists:

Confirming the importance of the event in process is the perplexed and hostile attitude of the Right and a part of the Center, which a short time ago were deploring the political subordination of the Socialist Party to the Communists and exhorting it to independence. But hardly has this independence emerged as a possibility than a grave peril is seen. . . . The Right politicians (and partly the Center ones) are in reality less anti-Communist in the name of freedom than they are anti-Socialist in the name of the old social order. *Socialist unification cannot be conceived of in anti-Communist perspective, but rather in an anti-capitalist one.* (My italics.)

In all Communist Parties, also, the entire membership is engaged in a searching analysis of their practices, programs and principles and in all of them the objectives of greater unity and greater freedom are apparent. At the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, just concluded, the problem of combatting sectarianism was placed in the forefront. The extension of inner-Party democracy was the keynote, and the airing of different views was put forward as the chief manner of arriving at a just estimate of reality. Said an editorial in the *People's Daily* of Peking, October 9:

Not only in discussions during which decisions are to be made should free expression of different views be permitted. Even after decisions have already been made, the Party should allow individual members to reserve their differing views and present these to organizations at a higher level and allow organizations at a lower level to present their differing views to those at a higher level.

The Draft Resolution of the Communist Party of the United States denounces "dogmatic application of Marxist theory," "doctrinaire acceptance" of theoretical propositions, the "uncritical acceptance of many views of Marxists and Marxist parties in other countries" and says that such habits prevailed in the past. It denounces "doctrinaire forms of party organization, bureaucratic methods of leadership, failure to develop inner party democracy" and calls for a thorough and independent study of "the distinctive features of the American road to Socialism." The single member of the National Committee, William Z. Foster, whose differences with aspects of the Draft Resolution were sufficient to cause him to vote against it, in his recent article setting forth his own views (*Political Affairs*, October 1956) states that, "The Party membership have said clearly in the debate that they want their Party to be more democratic, less dogmatic." He also demands a "war against bureaucracy"; he also wants "new and better concepts of Party democracy"; he

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I do not wish here to express my own views upon the content of the Draft Resolution, nor the position of William Z. Foster, for this is not the proper occasion. But I do point out that there is overwhelming agreement in the Party as to the critical need for deep-going changes in its practices and policies, in its conduct vis-a-vis its own members and people outside its ranks.

Given this situation—and its existence is indubitable—and given the fact that internationally and within our own country there is a growing desire to submerge past differences in the critical need for the parallel or common activity of all partisans of social advance, I find every cause to believe that the forthcoming February convention of the Communist Party will result in healthy changes and in the revitalization of the Communist movement.

* * *

In 1771, Samuel Adams, denounced as a traitor, insisted that

The true patriot will enquire into the causes of the fears and jealousies of his countrymen; and if he finds

they are not groundless, he will be far from endeavoring to allay or stifle them. On the contrary, he will by all proper means in his power foment and cherish them. He will, as far as he is able, keep the attention of his fellow citizens awake to their grievances; and not suffer them to be at rest, till the causes of their complaints are removed. . . .

The task of "true patriots" has always been difficult. The visions of true patriots have varied but the essential goals are identical. Our duty is to pool our strength and illuminate the insights of each other. Our duty is mutual encouragement and assistance.

The need is not to scatter what organizations we have, but to improve and strengthen them. The Communist Party is an honorable and viable member of the present-day band of "true patriots." Its members have no monopoly on patriotism and no patent on *the* way forward. But its members can make their organization what they want it to be. Having accomplished that, Communists, with renewed vigor, will make their modest contributions to the welfare of the American people, to the unity of the Left, and to the cause of Socialism.

Strachey's "Contemporary Capitalism"

By Hyman Lumer

BACK IN THE thirties, John Strachey was a prolific and widely-read Marxist writer. There are many who obtained their first introduction to Marxist ideas from such books as his *Coming Struggle for Power*, *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis* and *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*.

Subsequently, however, Strachey abandoned Marxism. He became a prominent figure in the British Labor Party, and since 1945 has been a Labor Member of Parliament. He also held some important posts in the Labor Government, including that of Cabinet member.

With the publication of his latest book, *Contemporary Capitalism*,* he breaks a long period of silence and comes forward as a leading theoretical spokesman for the British Labor Party. The present volume contains a general survey of his ideas. It is the first of a projected series, of which forthcoming volumes will develop a number of these ideas more fully. Written in Strachey's persuasive and simple style, this is a thought-provoking, challenging book, one which is already the subject of widespread debate.

* Random House, New York, 374 pages, \$5

"LATEST-STAGE CAPITALISM"

Strachey undertakes to present a theory of scientific Socialism not based on Marx, but leaning rather on the ideas of J. M. Keynes. He begins with the thesis that capitalism has attained a new stage during the past fifty years, a stage in many respects radically different from earlier ones, and that a modern theory of Socialism must take these new features into account.

In the course of his analysis, he devotes much space to a criticism of Marxism. He expresses great admiration for Marx's insight and achievements but, he asserts: "Marxism, which should be, and professes to be, a *method*, and not a 'system,' which professes indeed to be a method of the greatest flexibility, has been allowed to degenerate into, precisely, a system of the greatest rigidity." He sets out, therefore, "to take a modest step in the indispensable process of re-integrating Marxism with the Western cultural traditions from which it derives, but from which it has widely diverged."

The new stage of capitalism, which

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Strachey calls simply "latest-stage capitalism," is distinguished, he says, from the preceding one principally by the concentration of production into larger and larger units, to the point where free competition is replaced by "oligopoly," with each major sphere of production increasingly dominated by a handful of giant firms.

Capitalism, Strachey continues, has thus undergone a mutation, of which the most decisive consequence is the ability of these large units to exercise some control over prices instead of being completely at their mercy. This, in turn, necessitates a close association of the state with the economy, for "an economy of large and few units tends to lose the rough-and-ready, painful but in the end effective, self-regulating mechanism of the truly competitive stage of capitalism." Hence the system exhibits a growing instability, which can be checked only by the economic intervention of the state.

Further, such an economy becomes more susceptible to statistical measurement in terms of the national product and its distribution, and hence more susceptible to control. The new stage thus makes a higher degree of economic control both imperative and possible. The question is whether it will be controlled in the interests of the oligopolists or of the population as a whole.

THE LABOR THEORY OF VALUE

The labor theory of value, Strach-

ey contends, is inadequate to explain these new features of capitalism. It contains, in his opinion, two fatal flaws.

The first is that by measuring the national product as a sum of man-hours of socially-necessary labor, it provides no measure of changes in the productivity of labor. With a given work force and hours of work, the total product is fixed, and a community can get no richer unless one or both of these factors are increased. But this flies in the face of experience, for many communities have become much richer during the past century with reduced hours of work, thanks to the great rise in productivity.

The second objection is that the labor theory leads of necessity to a subsistence theory of wages. For if the value of labor power is determined by the number of man-hours of labor required to produce that quantity of commodities which will just sustain the worker and his family, and if labor power on the average sells at its value, wages cannot, in the long run, rise above the level of subsistence. But here, too, the theory has been falsified by history, for in all capitalist countries real wages have risen greatly during the past century.

Using the labor theory, Strachey holds that Marx derived a law of capitalist accumulation which contains as an inevitable process the absolute and relative immiseration of the working class. As time goes on, however, this theory proves to be in-

creasingly at variance with the facts, for not only has the absolute standard of living risen greatly, but even the relative position of the workers has improved. In Britain, Strachey asserts, the share of wages in the national income has remained the same over the century ending in 1939, and has increased about 10 per cent in the period since 1939.

Present-day Marxists have clung to the labor theory as a rigid dogma. Consequently, they regard the national product as a fixed total to be divided between capitalist and worker, and see this division as necessarily taking place to the growing disadvantage of the latter. It is this major error, says Strachey, which lies at the root of all the gross blunders being committed today by Communists the world over.

"WHY MARX WAS WRONG"

What Marx and his successors failed to see, according to Strachey, is that the impoverishment of the wage earners under capitalism is only a *tendency*, which can be reversed by non-economic factors, specifically the use of the machinery of democracy by the people to improve their economic lot. Had Marx placed it this way, instead of as an absolute law, he would have come much closer to the truth.

The source of this error lies in Ricardo's and Marx's vain search for a measure of absolute value. But, says Strachey:

We shall never find any such thing as absolute or intrinsic value, or "the substance of value," for it turns out that value is purely social, *i.e.*, a relationship between people rather than a relationship between things. As a matter of fact, Marx himself declared that value was "a non-material property . . . something the reality of which is exclusively social." . . . Unfortunately, however, he usually, though not always, treated value as if it were "composed" of man-hours of socially necessary labour time, just as a Newtonian scientist thought of matter as composed of hard, "billiard-ball" atoms.

However, we can get along without a measure of absolute value. Just as contemporary physicists successfully manipulate quantities whose essential nature is unknown and obtain meaningful results, we can do so with quantities measuring production and wealth. With modern statistical techniques, we can measure the distribution of the national product, and perhaps eventually arrive at a theory of its distribution which is independent of the labor theory of value. Such an empirical approach is preferable, Strachey argues, to adherence to rigid theorems which have proved themselves inadequate.

THE ROLE OF DEMOCRACY

Strachey holds that what has upset Marx's calculations is the growing political power of the people. It is this which has effectively counteracted the inherent tendency of capitalism to impoverish the wage

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erners. The existence of representative democracy and the exercise of democratic rights, including the right of association into trade unions, has enabled the people to achieve a sufficient redistribution of income to overcome the tendency of oligopoly to go to extremes, and has provided a sufficient degree of regulation to keep the system from collapse.*

Contemporary Marxist theory does not allow of any such role for political factors. Marxist thinking always places economic development as causal and political development as consequential. But their interaction is in reality highly complex and reciprocal.

Lenin is wrong when he asserts that the franchise offers the workers no real choice. Representative government does provide a real choice between political parties, who must vie in making concessions to the voters in order to win elections. Furthermore, in a democracy no government can afford a slump, and hence any democratic government can be compelled to bolster the economy by increasing mass purchasing power in one way or another.

To explain the regulating effect of the democratic processes on the economy, Strachey leans heavily on the theories of Keynes which, he

* This, Strachey says, is a feature of highly-developed industrial societies, in which the bulk of accumulation has already taken place. In undeveloped societies, whether capitalist or communist, the process of industrialization necessitates *limitation* of mass consumption for a considerable period, and hence limits the development and effectiveness of democracy.

claims, provide a better diagram for dealing with the question of economic crisis than does Marxist theory.

Keynes demonstrated that contemporary capitalism is not self-regulating, that savings do not necessarily lead to investment, which is the mainspring of the economy. He also offered a program through which the government could act to *induce* investment and thus to maintain an adequate level of demand. "The positive part of Keynes' work was a demand that capitalism should now be regulated and controlled by a central authority. . . . The principle instruments of its policy should be variations in the rate of interest, budgetary deficits and surpluses, public works and a redistribution of personal incomes in the equalitarian direction."

Keynes himself sought through such policies to preserve capitalism:

What he actually accomplished was something which he did not intend. . . . And that has been to help the democratic, and, on this side of the Atlantic, democratic socialist, forces to find a way of continuously modifying the system, in spite of the opposition of the capitalist interests. Keynes made the greatest single contribution to the technique of democratic transition. In so doing, he helped to show the peoples of the West a way forward which did not lead across the bourne of total class war—a bourne from which the wage earners of the West recoil, now that they can see its ragging waters.

Strachey therefore sees in the Keynesian policies a means of effecting gradually, by continuous modification, a transformation of capitalism into Socialism. "It is not to be doubted," he says, "that democracy, *if it can maintain itself*, will in fact transform latest-stage capitalism, in the end out of existence." (Emphasis in original.)

To be sure, this will require a constant struggle. Latest-stage capitalism and democracy are in many ways incompatible, for the former tends to concentrate, the latter to diffuse power. Hence capitalism continuously encroaches on democracy and strives to thwart the democratic processes.

The role which Strachey attributes to bourgeois democracy is actually the central theme of the book. He presents it as the most desirable ideal, which he counterposes to both Communism and fascism as equally deviating from it and equally evil. Through the exercise of democratic rights, the wage earners can assume control of the state, and through a program of Keynesian reforms they can continuously improve their economic status and in the end transform capitalism into Socialism. Such is the picture which Strachey paints.

"LATEST-STAGE CAPITALISM" VS. "IMPERIALISM"

This approach to Socialism obviously differs greatly from that of Marx and Lenin. Strachey believes that capitalism must inevitably give

way to Socialism, but he rejects the idea that it will do so because it fails increasingly to work, and because the mass of the people must therefore eventually find its continued existence intolerable. On the contrary, he pictures Socialism as emerging in the course of a steady improvement in the economic conditions of the people.

What he calls "latest-stage capitalism" obviously corresponds to Lenin's "imperialism," a term which he rejects as being one-sided. But his picture of this period is much different from Lenin's. Strachey sees contemporary capitalism not as a decaying system, whose sharpening contradictions plunge it into a deepening state of general crisis, but as a system capable of regulation, of being rendered more stable than it was in the nineteenth century. He sees it as a system capable of reducing economic fluctuations, lessening the danger of periodic crises, softening the contradictions inherent in capitalist production and abating the class struggle.

Underlying this position is his repudiation of the labor theory of value, which lies at the very heart of the Marxist-Leninist concept of Scientific Socialism. He is by no means the first to do so; "refutations" of this theory are innumerable. But Strachey's holds up no better than the others.

WHAT MARX SAID

To begin with, he presents an oversimplified and too rigid inter-

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pretation of what Marx himself said.

It is not true that either Marx or present-day Marxists take no account of the growth of the national product through rising productivity. To be sure, the labor theory of value *as such* does not, but then it was never intended to. Marx clearly distinguishes between use-value and exchange value, and points out that the two have independent measures. The labor theory applies only to exchange-value and has nothing to do with the actual quantities of material wealth arising from the expenditure of labor-time, the latter being governed by the level of productivity. Marx writes:

Useful labor becomes . . . a more or less abundant source of products, in proportion to the rise or fall of its productiveness. On the other hand, no change in this productiveness affects the labor represented by value. Since productive power is an attribute of the concrete useful forms of labor, of course it can no longer have any bearing on that labor, so soon as we make abstraction from those concrete useful forms. (*Capital*, Vol. I, Modern Library Edition, p. 53.)

This is a perfectly legitimate abstraction, which in itself does not in any way assert that the quantity of wealth arising from the expenditure of a given amount of labor time is fixed or deny that a community can become richer with less expenditure of labor because of rising pro-

ductivity. Marx uses it to determine how *exchange-values* are distributed between capitalist and worker, and how *this* distribution is affected by rising productivity. In doing so, he does not overlook the fact that a given quantity of exchange-value may embody different quantities of material wealth at different times.

Strachey also places entirely too rigid a meaning on the concept of subsistence. Marx never equated the value of labor power with the barest level of subsistence. In *Value, Price and Profit*, he says:

The value of the laboring power is formed by two elements—the one merely physical, the other historical or social. Its *ultimate limit* is determined by the *physical* element. . . . Besides this mere physical element, the value of labor is in every country determined by a *traditional standard of life*. It is not mere physical life, but it is the satisfaction of certain wants springing from the social conditions in which people are placed and reared up.

Workers, through their unions, fight to raise wages to the upper limit, while capitalists strive to push them down towards the lower limit.

Thus Marx, though he continually warns against exaggerating the significance of reforms under capitalism, takes a far more positive view of the value of trade-union struggles for immediate economic gains than Strachey imputes to him.

Moreover, with new inventions, new products and rising productiv-

ity, the idea of what constitutes a subsistence level changes. What is considered necessary for subsistence today includes much that did not even exist 50 or 100 years ago.

It is in relation to such changing *social* standards that economic status is measured. Thus, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in compiling its budget for a minimum standard of health and decency, is constantly revising it to take such changes into account. Organized labor measures its progress largely in terms of what proportion of the workers earn wages above or below the BLS minimum. And the average worker compares his living standard not with that of his ancestors, but with what is considered the norm at the given time.

In these terms, impoverishment may occur in a very real sense, even though people are far from being reduced to starvation. If we view the question in this light, as Marx does, it is clear that the labor theory does not lead to a subsistence theory of wages in Strachey's sense of the term. It is also clear that a long-term rise in living standards does not in itself constitute a disproof of the labor theory.

Finally, without a theory of value it is impossible, in dealing with the determination of prices or the distribution of the national income, to go beyond mere superficial description. In repudiating the labor theory, Strachey leaves himself with nothing more than what he terms "that sturdy

British empiricism" and the pious hope that it will lead to something.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Nor does Strachey make much of a case for his contention that the working class generally has suffered no relative impoverishment during the past century. We are not in a position to dispute the figures he cites for Britain, though some of these raise some question. We can, however, challenge the applicability of his conclusions to the United States. The figures compiled by the Labor Research Association (*Trends in American Capitalism*, New York, 1948) and by Victor Perlo (*The Income "Revolution,"* New York, 1954) show clearly that since 1899 the relative position of the factory worker (his share in his product) has markedly declined. The period since 1939 also shows a considerable decline.

Strachey also states that in Britain, since 1938, the burden of direct taxes has shifted toward the large-income groups. This is certainly not true of the United States, where the proportion of income taxes paid by individuals with taxable incomes below \$5,000 rose from 10 per cent in 1939 to 40 per cent in 1949.

Much needs to be done to advance the labor theory of value beyond the point at which Marx left it—a task which has been sadly neglected. And in this country, a definitive study of the whole question of im-

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poverishment of the working class has yet to be made. But it is equally clear that Strachey's thesis that the position of the working class has improved both absolutely and relatively is yet to be proven.

DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM

Strachey departs greatly from the Marxist theory of the state as an instrument of the ruling class. He evidently tends to reject, as a one-sided over-simplification the Marxist conception of political institutions as derivative, as part of the social superstructure, and ascribes to them a virtually independent existence. This is apparent in his idealization of bourgeois democracy, in his belief that through it the contradictions of capitalism can be largely overcome, political power can become diffused even while economic power becomes increasingly concentrated and the powerful monopolies can be deprived of both their political and economic power.

He visualizes the coming into existence of Socialism not as a revolutionary transformation of society, but as a gradual, almost imperceptible process, the result of a "continuous modification" of capitalism in the course of which the class struggle gradually recedes. What he emerges with, therefore, is a contemporary version of Social-Democratic gradualism.

Strachey's program resembles pretty much those of the reformist

and revisionist socialists of an earlier day. The chief difference is that while they called themselves Marxists, their successors today have generally abandoned Marx altogether in favor of Keynes. Strachey himself, though he speaks of "re-integrating Marxism with Western cultural traditions," actually discards the essence of Marxism and looks to Keynes' theories as offering a "better diagram" of the workings of capitalism.

A program of Keynesian reforms, desirable as they may be, can never result in Socialism. The history of socialist governments and parliamentary majorities in the past amply bears this out. The Labor Government in Britain brought the country not one inch closer to Socialism, and another such Government, *following the same line*, would accomplish no more. To establish Socialism, it is necessary for the working class not only to win control of the government but to wage a fight on all fronts for the socialist reorganization of society. Only where this has been accomplished does Socialism exist today.

THE MARXIST ATTITUDE

Though Marxists clearly cannot accept Strachey's theoretical position, they cannot similarly reject his criticisms, some of which have considerable merit, or the numerous challenging questions which he raises.

Thus, he charges Marxists with converting what Marx and Engels

originally developed as a flexible method into a rigid, dogmatic system. Although he himself winds up by discarding the method with the system, his criticism nevertheless calls attention to the fact that we have indeed tended to treat Marxist theory, particularly economic theory, as if it were a completed whole, and have failed to expand and develop it sufficiently to meet new situations and new questions, as a truly scientific approach demands.

Strachey raises some especially important questions concerning the interrelationship of economic and political factors in present-day capitalism. These call attention to the significant consequences, both economic and political, arising from the extensive development of government economic intervention during the last two decades—consequences whose study we have largely neglected. He also poses some interesting questions regarding the economic implications of the ability of monopolies to affect prices.

There are many other such questions, all of which demand Marxist analysis. It is clear, therefore, that our approach to Strachey's position cannot end with polemizing against

it. We must examine seriously both the criticisms he makes and the questions he poses.

We must recognize also that, despite serious theoretical differences, there is much in Strachey's position, particularly its anti-monopoly aspects and its common goal of Socialism, which offers a basis for unity and common action. We must seek out these areas of common interest, and combat sectarian tendencies simply to condemn outright those with whom we have ideological differences.

Further, despite his disagreements with their ideas, Strachey does not ridicule Marx and Engels but debates their theories seriously and soberly. In this he resembles a number of Keynesian economists who have begun to discuss Marx seriously—a refreshing contrast to the conspiracy of silence and ignorance which has existed among orthodox economists for such a long time. It opens the door for a fruitful kind of give-and-take between Marxists and non-Marxists, from which both can profit. And Strachey's book in particular will do much to stimulate such discussion.

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Karl Marx and Mass Impoverishment

By William Z. Foster

ONE OF THE greatest achievements of Marx and Engels was their theory of the absolute impoverishment of the workers under capitalism. That is, in a society where the means of production are privately-owned by a small section of that society, the workers are compelled to work essentially for subsistence wages. In *Value, Price and Profit* Marx states the matter thus: "The value of laboring power is determined by the value of the necessaries required to produce, develop, maintain, and perpetuate the laboring power."—i.e., the worker gets a subsistence wage, while the capitalists take the balance of his product. This setup inevitably leads to the creation, at one end of the social scale, of a small class of property owners, and at the other end, of a great mass of propertyless, poverty-stricken workers. The impoverishment of the workers is, therefore, a built-in feature of the capitalist system, whereby the capitalists grow wealthy by appropriating to themselves all that the workers produce above the minimum wages required to reproduce themselves and to keep in working order.

The workings of this law of im-

poorishment under capitalism, which in Marx's time were frightfully obvious in the terrible slums and pauperization of the workers in England, are now most graphically to be seen in the bottomless poverty of the hundreds of millions of producers in the colonial and semi-colonial lands of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They are also evidenced by the fact that in all the capitalist countries as well, huge masses of workers continue to live in dire poverty, despite large increases in industrial production over the decades. Thus, in France, for example, the real wages of Paris metal workers were one-third lower in 1952 than they were in 1938 (C.P. Congress Report, 1956, p. 361), notwithstanding a 25 per cent increase in industrial output in the meantime. Similar conditions are to be found in Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, and elsewhere.

Also in the United States, the boasted land of capitalist "prosperity," the workings of the law of mass impoverishment are to be seen. Notwithstanding the enormous productivity of the workers, over 10 per cent of American families are now

existing upon incomes of less than \$1,000 per year, and more than one-half of the total number of families receive less than \$4,000 annually, whereas, the Heller budget for 1953 states that a net yearly income of \$5,335 is necessary for a family of four to maintain minimum living standards in a community such as New York. At the very bottom levels of poverty are the Negro people, with their sub-normal standards regarding wages, jobs, civil rights, housing, etc. In the *New York Herald-Tribune* of October 15th, the conservative columnist, Joseph Alsop, stated that the Harlem apartments are fully as horrible as the worst slums of Bombay. As against all this needless poverty and misery, the wealth of the American billionaires is fabulous, and needs no description here.

In these times, especially as there has been an upswing of industry in most capitalist countries, bringing certain minor alleviations in the condition of broad sections of the workers, Marx and Engels are under heavy attack from bourgeois economists and conservative Social Democrats, upon the grounds that in their law of the impoverishment of the workers, they have set up barriers against the possibility for the improvement of capitalist conditions for workers that have been contradicted by experience. On all sides this attack upon the two great pioneers of scientific Socialism is to be encountered.

But it is an unjustified attack. With their usual keen perception of realities, Marx and Engels already saw that there were limiting restraints upon the operation of the elementary capitalist economic law of the impoverishment of the workers, although at this time the operation of such restraints was only in its earliest stages. *First*, in his famous debate with Weston in 1865 (see *Value, Price and Profit*) Marx clearly recognized that the workers, by trade-union action, could increase their real wages and cut into the profits of the employers. He declared, "The matter resolves itself into a question of the respective powers of the combatants." In this debate Marx laid the theoretical basis of trade unionism as against the fatalistic "iron-law-of-wages" theories of Ricardo, Lassalle, and other economists and political leaders. Of course, nowadays, the great unions and political organizations of the workers, with their power to halt all industry and to change the course of governments, are far more able to limit the workings of the mass impoverishment law of capitalism than were the weak trade unions of Marx's period.

Second, Marx and Engels also understood that with the world growth of British trade and industry, the capitalists themselves also tended to limit the effects of the process of mass impoverishment, at least among certain very important categories of workers, by making

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special wage concessions to the skilled workers in order thus to check the militant fighting spirit of the working class as a whole. Already by 1858 this practice was so widespread in Great Britain that Engels, in a letter to Marx (*Selected Correspondence*, pp. 115-16), said, "The English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat, as well as a bourgeoisie." In later decades, this corruptive practice by the employers became a regular course for the imperialists in all the major capitalist countries.

Third, Marx and his co-worker Engels recognized that national traditions and customs also exerted a powerful influence in establishing the living conditions of the workers, as against the basic impoverishing tendencies of capitalism. In *Capital* (Vol. I, p. 150) Marx says, "The number and extent of his [the worker's] so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development . . . and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, this class of free laborers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the

determination of the value of labor-power, a historical and moral element." In line with this principle, for example, in the United States higher wage standards are more deeply imbedded in the national traditions than, say, in India, and this is a big economic advantage for the American workers in wage struggles.

Fourth, That the two great founders of modern Socialism recognized the possibility of the workers achieving certain limited amelioration of their conditions under capitalism was shown also by the fact that, although they never lost sight of the Socialist goals of the proletariat, they systematically supported every struggle of the workers for immediate demands upon both the economic and political fields. Marx hailed the passage of the Ten Hours Bill and the various factory laws in England as great victories; and as a central leader of the First International he was an ardent builder of trade unions and a tireless supporter of their struggles. He and Engels also backed the adoption of programs of partial (immediate) demands by the various national Socialist parties then being born, but they never ceased to warn the workers that emancipation could not be won merely by accumulating such partial achievements.

In view of all these facts, it is nonsense to assert that the theories of Marx were based on an "iron law of

wages" and did not take into consideration the possibility of partial improvement of the conditions of the workers under capitalism, in spite of the elementary trend of capitalism towards their impoverishment. On the contrary, Marxists, save the sectarian elements such as De Leon, have always been the best fighters for every possible betterment of the workers' living and working conditions under capitalism.

SOME MODERN EXAMPLES OF HOW THE LAW WORKS

In line with the theory and practice of Marx regarding "exceptions" to the workings of the law of mass impoverishment, there are at work within the framework of the capitalist system today such counter-tendencies. Especially in the more developed capitalist countries, these anti-impoverishment trends tend to produce higher living standards, especially for the more skilled categories of workers. This is evidenced by the higher real wages, the shorter work-week, better social security, more adequate protection against industrial accidents, etc., that have been achieved over the years by the workers in various countries. Such limited improvements are, however, always under threat from the destructive effects of economic crisis, inflation, unemployment, war, fascism, lost strikes, excessive taxes, etc., which, as we have seen in many countries, may wipe out altogether

betterments that have been partially won by the workers after decades of struggle and fling the workers down to the depths of mass impoverishment. In this respect we need only look back to the catastrophic effects upon the workers' standards under capitalism of the two world wars, fascism, and the great economic crisis of 1929-33.

Such improvement as may be achieved by the workers under capitalist conditions are also more than offset by increased capitalist exploitation. What, for example, is happening in American industry is indicated by figures assembled by the recent wage negotiations of the United Steelworkers. These show that whereas in 1953 the average worker in industry could buy 10 per cent more with his pay than he could in 1944, his productivity had mounted by some 35 per cent in this period, and the capitalists' profits after taxes had soared by 110 per cent. All this constitutes a relative impoverishment which tends to produce absolute impoverishment. Only under Socialism, with the industries owned by the people and the political power in the hands of the workers and their allies, will the workers be able to raise their living standards to the maximum and to make these standards safe from all attack.

The indicated limited improvements in real wages and living standards, which apply chiefly to the skilled and more strongly organized

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workers, represent a long term trend in the major capitalist countries. All such countries have experienced the trend at one time or another and in varying degrees. It is now particularly manifest in those lands which escaped the ravages of the two world wars, notably the United States, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc. The current post-war industrial boom is also tending, at least temporarily, to accentuate the improvement factors in many capitalist countries.

As we have seen, these current partial improvements in working class conditions, such as they are, in no sense contradict the Marxist principle of the impoverishment of the working class by capitalism. They have been brought about primarily by the increased struggle of the workers in all countries to mitigate the effects of this harsh capitalist law of absolute impoverishment through the strength and militancy of their economic and political organizations. The rapid growth of capitalist production has also made it possible to wring these higher standards of living from the capitalists. Besides, the latter, enriched by widely expanding production, have frequently made concessions to the skilled workers in order to use them as a brake upon the militancy of the working class as a whole. Over the years, particularly since about 1890, the fact of the limited improvement in working

class conditions has also given birth to many opportunist illusions regarding the supposed automatic emancipation of the workers through the basic operations of the capitalist system. These illusions have been expressed by such tricky concepts as "organized capitalism," "the welfare state," "progressive capitalism," "managed economy," "people's capitalism," etc., and at no time have they been more vivid than now. Against these opportunist slogans, Marxist-Leninists must and always have necessarily waged an endless struggle.

American workers, especially the skilled and the well-organized groups, have benefited considerably from the limited improvement trends indicated above. During the past half-century particularly, American working and living conditions, for large sections of the working class, have been considerably bettered. The basic cause for this has been the spectacular rise of American imperialism. This has enabled the monopolists to exploit peoples all over the world, and the workers have been able to wrest from them a certain share of the resultant "prosperity." American real wages average from two to five times as high as those now prevailing in capitalist Europe, a situation which basically accounts for the present-day relatively more conservative moods of the working class in this country. With characteristic exaggeration, bourgeois economists boastfully estimate the improvement

in American living standards since the turn of the century at 100 per cent or even higher.

A more realistic figure is that of Victor Perlo, who puts the increase in real wages of employed workers in manufacturing during this period at about 50 per cent (*The Income "Revolution,"* p. 55). Offsets to this increase in basic wages are the high taxes, as well as the costs of the added strains upon workers of the speed-up in industry, the hazards of unemployment, etc. One of the important consequences of the rise in real wages, limited though it is, is that most of the stronger American unions, in wage negotiations, are now basing their demands less upon cost-of-living indexes and more upon the statistics of production. As against these modest improvements, American workers have definitely experienced a great increase in relative impoverishment, as we have remarked. As Perlo figures this—taking into consideration production increases, wages, prices, taxes, and employment—the general position of the working class in this country has fallen from 100 in 1899 to 51 in 1952.

Such limited improvements in wage and working conditions as the workers in the capitalist countries have been able to win in struggle over the years are at the present time resting upon doubly precarious foundations. They are constantly threatened by the never-ending pressure of the monopolists for greater profits through increased exploita-

tion of the workers; they are menaced by the growing threat of a serious economic crisis; and they also confront the possible hazards of fascism and war. All these evils are particularly conjured up and sharpened by the deepening general crisis of the world capitalist system. In the face of these actual and potential threats, however, we may be sure that, in any event, the workers will make a vigorous defense of their living standards and will fight aggressively against further mass impoverishment. They will not remain passive victims of the elementary crushing pressures of the system of capitalism, but will fight against these negative influences, which are fundamental to capitalism. The eventual radicalization of the American workers does not necessarily imply for them extreme impoverishment.

In the great revolutionary upheavals following the two world wars, we have seen how the workers responded to catastrophic attacks upon their living standards. Currently, there are two basic forces at work which are tending powerfully to enable the workers to defend their living standards more successfully than ever against the pauperizing tendencies of decaying capitalism. First, is the fact that during recent years there has been an enormous increase in the organized strength of the working class nationally and internationally. This is manifested by the great growth of the Socialist

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world, and also by the tremendous expansion of trade unions and other workers' organizations in all the capitalist countries. Moreover, the workers have now had a long taste of full employment; they know from experience that it is an economic possibility, and they therefore may be depended upon to fight militantly with their vast new strength against being forced down to the terrible conditions of mass unemployment and starvation which they experienced during the deep economic crisis in 1929-33 and in the breakdowns following the two great wars.

The second elementary factor making possible a far more effective fight by the workers to protect their living standards against every attack that the employers may deliver against them is that, as the workers' power internationally has vastly increased, so that of the monopoly capitalists has heavily decreased. World capitalism, caught in an incurable general crisis, has suffered enormous losses in strength in recent years. It has lost one-third of the world to Socialism, and its colonial system, one of the foundation props of world capitalism, is rapidly collapsing. Besides, the capitalists themselves, in dread of possible revolutionary consequences of another great economic crisis, are compelled to carry through Keynesian policies of subsidizing industry in order to try to avert or to limit such a crisis. They also feel it necessary, in vari-

ous instances, to appease the workers with substantial wage and other concessions, to offset their growing power. All of which represents a decline in the relative and actual fighting power of the monopoly capitalists, not excluding those in the United States.

In this country, during the cold war years especially, there has been a wide application of this appeasement, or corruption, policy, with the big capitalists conceding considerable wage increases and "fringe" benefits, particularly to the workers possessing the stronger unions. These concessions have amounted, in some cases, even to rises in real wages. This situation is greatly influenced by the fact that there has been a working (unofficial) class collaboration agreement between the monopoly capitalists and the top leaders of organized labor, the substance of which is a mutual support of Wall Street's aggressive foreign policies and the maintenance of enormous government "defense" expenditures of about \$40 billion yearly.

This setup has facilitated the securing of considerable wage advances for the more favored workers, while for the capitalists it has meant gigantic profits. The relative ease with which the stronger trade unions in this country have been getting wage boosts during the cold war years cannot be ascribed simply to the "boom" conditions that have prevailed generally in industry

through most of these years. Nor can the tender solicitude of the higher labor leaders for enormous "defense" appropriations be explained merely upon the grounds of their "fear" of a Soviet invasion. It has now become almost a routine affair for the big corporations to follow up their wage agreements with top-heavy price increases. Thus, typically the steel corporations, after their recent wage settlement, jacked up prices for steel \$3.19 for each \$1.00 increase they accorded the workers. Meanwhile, the unions directly concerned, and indeed the labor movement in general, have made very little protest against this highway robbery. Altogether, for the workers, this collaboration with the employers for such war-like and profit-mongering ends is a dangerous one. It is provocative of the war danger, it cultivates an eventual economic crisis, and it tends to fortify political reaction.

An international economic crisis (and such is gradually in the making) would, of course, throw many millions of workers out of jobs and would, in general, constitute a major attack against the living standards of the workers of the United States and all other capitalist countries. But it would be absurd to suppose that the workers would long remain passive in the face of such a catastrophe. On the contrary, undoubtedly they would quickly develop a bitter struggle to prevent wage cuts, to block mass layoffs, to expand social

insurance, and to compel the governments to put the paralyzed capitalist industries back into operation, regardless of the class interests of the employers. They would fight resolutely against the pauperization trends of capitalism. It is the fear of revolutionary consequences in such a contingency that has imbued the employers with their new dread of far-reaching mass unemployment.

EFFECTS UPON COMMUNIST PARTY POLICY

Communists are the best of all fighters for the immediate improvement of the living standards of the workers—we are far indeed from the old sectarian Anarchist slogan of "the worse, the better." But our enemies have long cultivated the argument, to which we have made an inadequate response, that we consider the gains won by the workers in struggle can be only temporary and that, by the workings of the inexorable laws of capitalism, American workers are foredoomed to a deep mass impoverishment before they can or will take up their march to Socialism. This subjects us to charges among the workers that we are insincere in our expressed concern for their immediate welfare. We must clear up such harmful confusion.

On the general question of defending and improving the living standards of the workers, the CPUSA, in accordance with elementary Marx-

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ist principles, as indicated above, should proceed upon the recognition of four points: a) the basic trend in capitalism, as Marx and Engels pointed out, is towards the relative and absolute impoverishment of the workers; b) limited improvements in the workers' living standards are possible within the framework of capitalism by active struggle; c) such improvements, so long as capitalism lasts, must rest upon very uncertain foundations, subject to violent employer attacks through unemployment, economic crises, wars, lost strikes, political reaction, excessive tax rates, and increased worker exploitation, and d) only by the establishment of Socialism and the abolition of the capitalist robbery of the proletariat and domination of society can the workers' living standards be placed on a solid basis and upon an ever-ascending plane of improvement.

The Communist Party must recognize clearly that the workers now have the organized power to defend successfully their living standards against any kind of attack that may be made against them by the employers during an economic crisis or otherwise. The reality that even under capitalism the workers may be able to increase and to defend their living standards need not, in the long run, lead them to accommodate themselves to capitalism and to turn a deaf ear to Socialism. The severe problems and pressures of the capitalist system as it sinks into general

decay, plus alert Marxist-Leninist leadership and class struggle policies, can avert any such contingency. More and more, on a world scale, the workers are taking the offensive in defending and improving their living standards against all employers' attacks and against the general impoverishment tendencies of obsolescent capitalism. The CPUSA should do all possible to strengthen in our country this basic trend of the international labor movement. Especially it should lay stress upon developing the counter-crisis programs of the trade unions. These must be based, not upon the "trickle down" theories of Keynesism, but upon real attacks against monopoly capitalist profits. The Party must help to ready the workers to fight militantly for these when the acute need appears, as it will. It must cultivate among the masses the meaning of Socialism, as their only guarantee of prosperity.

The basic changes in the world situation—with the tremendous increase in the forces of the workers and decline in those of the monopoly capitalists—are leading to important developments in theory and policy on the part of us Communists and our allies. Marxism-Leninism is rapidly evolving and further expanding many of its correct basic policies. Striking recent examples of this evolution have been in the cases of the adoption of new forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the possibility of halting imperialist

war, and of achieving Socialism along parliamentary lines. Marxist theories of the cyclical crises of capitalism are also being developed to take into consideration Keynesian governmental policies designed to modify or to prevent such economic breakdowns. It is necessary also, under the same general reasons of national and world changes, to further clarify our conceptions and policies regarding the question of the impoverishment of the working class under capitalism, as indicated above. Especially, the Party must initiate a thorough-going study of the course of real wages and living and working conditions of the workers in the United States.

These recent innovations in Communist theory and policy do not

constitute a weakening or an abandonment of Marxism-Leninism, as so many comrades these days assume, but its development in order to meet rapidly changing world conditions. They are not class collaborationist, but are based upon the class struggle. In this country, they tend to lay the basis for ever-closer working relations between the Communist Party and the great masses of organized and unorganized workers. They demonstrate, above all, the flexibility of Marxism-Leninism and prove again that it is indeed not a dogma but a guide to action. And they illustrate the folly of those in our Party who would have us dilute, revise, and abandon this fruitful science of the international movement for Socialism.

At the author's request, the second half of W. Z. Foster's, "Marxism-Leninism in a Changing World"—the first part of which appeared in our September issue—has been held over—ed.

By Joe

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Time for a Change

By John Gates

*"New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth."*

—from *The Present Crisis* by James Russell Lowell

THE PRESENT Party discussion is undoubtedly the most crucial in our history. I believe we are in a profound crisis. This situation did not come about just in the last few months, but is the accumulation of many factors, some of which operated during the entire history of our Party and were brought to a head by recent events.

The protests against those who feel that their lives have been wasted miss the point, in my opinion. Of course we have made vital and lasting contributions to the progress of our country, and this is a legitimate source of pride for all of us. But that is exactly why so many of our members are so deeply disturbed. Why, despite our contribution to making our country and the world a better and safer place to live in, is our Party at such a low point? Just because of our past achievements, we must give frank and honest answers to where we are, how did we get there, and where do we go from here.

The crisis we are in is a deep and many-sided one. We have suffered great losses in membership and even more in influence. We are isolated almost entirely as a Party from the

labor movement, the Negro people, and the farmers. The confidence of many people in us that we built up over many years has been largely dissipated. Even the confidence of our own members in the Party and its leadership has been severely shaken. Those of our members who are in the popular mainstream are doing fine work as progressive trade unionists and Negro militants, but not in most cases as known and organized Communists. We are still compelled to function largely as an illegal or semi-legal organization. Although the country is emerging from the reaction of the past decade, our decline in numbers and influence has still not been halted. The labor and Negro people's movements successfully resisted the reactionary offensive of the cold war years and are advancing with seven-league boots, but we who pioneered in the struggle for labor unity, industrial unionism, and equal rights for the Negro people are largely outside of this advance.

The advance of the American workers to Socialism is impossible without a conscious and organized socialist vanguard. In all candor we

must admit that we are not that today. Nor are we likely to be the exclusive channel through which such a leadership will come into existence, but I do think we are an important and essential part of this process and can make a decisive and distinctive contribution if we face up to our present crisis and make the necessary changes to surmount it.

THE DRAFT RESOLUTION

In my opinion the draft resolution does begin to do this and that is why I voted for it. I do not think it is perfect. It does not profess to have all the answers, and not all of its ideas are necessarily correct. As a member of the National Committee which has made so many serious errors, I feel the need for modesty and humility. Our resolution is the beginning and not the end of wisdom, and it is up to the present discussion to perfect and correct it where necessary. To achieve this, we need to create an atmosphere which welcomes all new ideas no matter how unorthodox they may be, and debates them on their merits without resort to name calling as a substitute for thinking.

American history is replete with radical movements that flourished and made splendid contributions, but which subsequently disappeared or became sterile sects either because they outlived their usefulness or failed to change with changing times

and lost touch with reality. The Socialist Labor Party became such a sect, and the once powerful Socialist Party dwindled to a mere shadow of its former self mainly because of its sectarian opposition to the New Deal, to collective security against fascism, and of its disastrous merger with the Trotskyites.

If we are not to meet with the same fate, it will be because we take a good hard look at ourselves, our country and the world, do not hesitate to analyze our mistakes, admit them, and make the necessary corrections, no matter how painful. I am confident that we will.

THE PARTY'S ERRORS

In my opinion, those comrades who refuse to admit we made basic and fundamental errors do the Party a great disservice. They seek to minimize the mistakes by blaming the objective situation, gloss over them by saying in any case we were no worse than other Parties which made similar mistakes, and ascribe the crisis in the Party not to our mistakes but to our admission of them, as if the concealment of our errors would solve our problems.

Naturally everything in life is based on the objective situation, or reality. But it was just our wrong estimates of the objective situation which led to many of our wrong policies and actions. This was so with respect to our analyses of the war and fascist dangers and our

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perennial mistaken economic predictions. Some comrades invoke the objective situation today only in order to explain away our errors, but in the past when many of our members in unions and other organizations brought up the objective situation to prove that our line was unrealistic, we denounced them as Right opportunists for underestimating the militancy of the workers, etc. Today we admit that the average real wages of the workers have been rising, but only yesterday we insisted that the opposite was the case. If we admit that our electoral policy in 1948 was wrong then we must admit too that it resulted from the fact that either we ignored or mistakenly estimated the objective situation. And how can it be claimed that our 1948 electoral policy was wrong but our trade-union policy was correct?

Certainly many left us because of repression. But that does not explain why they are not returning to us now that the atmosphere is improving. Nor does repression explain why we lost prestige and influence. The real issue is how we fought against the repression. Did we pursue policies that would win us friends and influence, or did we facilitate the attacks against us and our isolation? It does no good to run away from our mistakes. Those who talk so much about a Marxist-Leninist party would do well to remember that one of the characteristics of such a party is fearless self-

criticism regardless of the use its opponents may make of it.

No political movement can live on the laurels of the past. Change is a law of political life. Even the Democratic Party has discovered it can no longer win on the memory of the New Deal. In the new situation of today, new problems have arisen which require bold new thinking and solutions. That is only possible if we eliminate the atmosphere which discourages new thought, insists we hold on to everything old as sacred, and brands as revisionist, Browderite, Right-wing and liquidationist all new ideas.

ERA OF GREAT CHANGE

We are living in a time of great change. The labor movement has grown to 18 million. The AFL-CIO merger was a gigantic and historic step which foreshadows new rapid advances and increased political influence for the American working class. It is a sign of the times when such a reactionary as Nixon feels compelled to talk about a four-day week. Labor is already strong enough to win the 30-hour or four-day week without reduction in pay when the situation makes it necessary. The only thing holding it back is the relatively full employment in most industries. With increasing productivity, reduction in working hours is inevitable. Labor is determined that never again will it permit the burden of future depressions to

be placed on its shoulders as in the thirties.

Some comrades say that all we have to do is to sit tight until the next depression and the return of the "good old days" of the thirties. This is a false and pernicious theory which has done us great damage and resulted in the world passing us by. The workers do not consider the days when they starved as the "good old days." They are not inclined to accept the return of such bad times as inevitable, and will follow the leadership of those with a program to prevent it, or to guarantee that they will not be its helpless victims if and when a depression does come. It is not true that Socialism can come about only through war and economic catastrophe. It will come through the constantly successful struggle for peace, prosperity and democracy. Furthermore, today is not 1929. Then the basic industrial workers were unorganized, the Negro people lacked organization and leadership, and we had a virtual monopoly in filling the vacuum. Now the situation is totally changed. This is one of the big unsolved problems that faces us, the relationship between us and the people under conditions where they now possess powerful unions and other organizations which are giving them leadership.

UNITY AGAINST MONOPOLY

The draft resolution states that the great overriding historic need

of the American people is to unite against the monopolies. The struggle to achieve a popular alliance that will weaken the grip of Big Business on the nation is the path through which the American people, led by labor, will eventually establish Socialism. This is the specific American road to Socialism. If we understand this simple but profound fact we will know who is the main enemy, against whom to direct the main fire, and where the leading force and its allies are to be found. Gil Green's book, *The Enemy Forgotten*, performs a great service in this regard, and is a most important contribution to our discussion. I believe it to be the most important and valuable book written by an American Communist so far.

It is true, as Gil Green writes that the main enemy, monopoly, was largely forgotten by the leaders of labor, the Negro people, and the liberals; but it is also true that while we Communists did not forget the enemy, we did not fight correctly against it. We failed to subordinate all our efforts to the struggle for unity against monopoly. We allowed ideological differences between us and the labor, Negro and liberal leaders to stand in the way of a single-minded struggle for popular unity against the economic royalists. Ideological debate and criticism within the potential anti-monopoly alliance is essential at all times, but within the framework of the struggle for unity. Instead we made ide-

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logical attack against our potential allies the main thing and weakened our fight for unity. This is the reason why we did not fight correctly against the CIO split, why we took a too negative and critical approach to the labor merger, and became isolated from the main struggles of the Negro people.

The struggle against monopoly is closely linked with the democratic transformation of the South. The continuation of the oppression of the Negro people in new forms after the abolition of chattel slavery is today the main obstacle to democratic and popular progress. This was true in the Civil War era too, but then it was chiefly a barrier to the rising capitalist class of the North to which the still young and undeveloped working class had to subordinate itself. Now the oppression of the Negro people is a big source of profits and political power for the monopolies, but constitutes the main roadblock in the path of American labor and the nation.

Organized labor and other sections of the population are coming to understand more and more that their immediate interests are tied up with the struggle for democracy in the South. Labor's next big advance depends on the unionization of the South which will both help and be helped by the achievement of democracy there. The passage of new social legislation in Congress such as school, housing and hospital construction, flood control, old age bene-

fits, etc., is blocked by the GOP-Dixiecrat alliance. The democratization of the South, at the heart of which lies Negro inequality and oppression, will not eliminate but greatly undermine and weaken the power of the trusts. It will reduce their profits and destroy the political power of their principal ally, the Dixiecrats, and make possible the election of a more progressive Congress. It will give a big new impetus to the building of the anti-monopoly alliance, and open the road for a new socialist advance. The anti-monopoly coalition is itself being built in this struggle. It exists in embryo in the host of powerful organizations that support the NAACP, in which organized labor plays an outstanding role.

The uncompleted democratic revolution in the South is intertwined with the progress of the nation as a whole. That is why the draft resolution calls it the nation's number one democratic task. This historic struggle is another basic and fundamental feature of the specific American road to Socialism.

A NEW WORLD SITUATION

We are living in a new world situation which began with the victory over fascism in 1945. Its main characteristic is the new relationship of forces resulting from the birth of a whole number of socialist states, the newly won independence of formerly colonial states, and the corresponding weakening of world capitalism. This profoundly new situation creates a

whole new set of problems requiring new theories and solutions.

The struggle for peaceful co-existence which began in 1917 with the Russian revolution now takes on a new aspect. Before 1914 war could be prevented only by socialist revolution. World War I could not be forestalled because the forces of revolution were not yet strong enough, but the war itself engendered revolution and was finally brought to an end by the Russian and German revolutions. World War II could have been prevented short of revolution by anti-fascist unity and collective security, but the Soviet Union and the working class and popular movements in the capitalist democracies did not prove strong or united enough to compel it. The war itself created the anti-fascist unity which brought it to a victorious end.

Now the existence of a bloc of socialist countries which is beginning to equal and will in the course of the next decades surpass the capitalist world in material strength, the growing power of the neutralist bloc, and the phenomenal growth of the labor and socialist movements in the capitalist countries, have brought about a power equilibrium which makes possible and practical the prevention of a new world war for the first time in history. This great new fact was put to the test and proved valid in the cold-war decade. The forces of war did not prove strong enough and were defeated. The cold war is slowly but

steadily diminishing, and we have already entered into a new era of peaceful co-existence which will probably be of long duration.

This new era is not a static one. It is marked at present by the continuation of the arms race which has led to a temporary stalemate, an uneasy truce, and an unstable peace. However, the emphasis in this new era is already beginning to shift away from arms to economic and political competition. The essence of the struggle for peaceful co-existence today therefore is to transform the present unstable peace into a lasting one, and there exists every prospect for the successful attainment of this aim.

This new era, the first stage of which we are already in, will have profound repercussions on our domestic scene. The new power and influence of the socialist and neutralist blocs and of the labor and socialist movements everywhere have already greatly aided the struggle of the Negro people and they will facilitate the fight of labor in America for a better life as well. They create the conditions for peace which is the most favorable climate for popular progress, and for the struggle to transform our present warfare economy into a welfare one. As the standard of living in the socialist countries continues to rise and begins to equal and surpass the capitalist countries, it will help the workers everywhere make new advances. None of this of course will come about automati-

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tally or out of the goodness of the heart of capitalism. Nothing will or can be achieved without struggle against Big Business. But it is essential for the class struggle that we understand the direction of events and that favorable conditions exist for success.

In my opinion this new era requires sweeping changes in our Party if we are to keep pace with rapidly changing events. I believe it requires that we build a Party of a new type. The concept of the Party under which we have been working was originally geared to a revolutionary situation, or the expectation of the rapid development of one. Regardless of one's opinions as to whether such a concept was ever valid for our conditions, certainly it is not valid for today.

We have entered into a protracted period of peaceful competition during which the struggle in our country will be of an evolutionary character, and lead to an eventual revolutionary transformation. The path towards the triumph of Socialism here is one of peaceful and constitutional struggle. We need a party geared to that kind of situation and struggle. We need a fully democratic party, a party that is legal and is solidly based on American reality and will be recognized and accepted by American workers as their own. Obviously we have been prevented from becoming a democratic and legal working class party by the repression of the government

and employers, and our struggle for legality cannot be divorced from the general struggle for democratic rights. Nevertheless I think that a substantial part of our present status is self imposed and in our power to change.

Comrade Foster writes in his article that "we must Americanize our Party" (*Political Affairs*, Oct. 1956). Stop and consider a while what that means. It is really a profoundly revealing statement. Comrade Foster complains that the draft resolution is too sweeping in its self-criticism, but in this statement he has made the most damning indictment of our Party that could possibly be made. Why back in the eighteenthies, Engels used to entreat the German Marxists who had migrated to America to Americanize themselves, to learn the language and customs, become part of the mainstream of the labor movement, and to apply Marxism to America creatively and not dogmatically. But for us now, after 38 years of existence as an American party, made up of Americans, most of whom were born here and have no problem of language or customs, to have to admit that we must still Americanize ourselves, reveals our situation better than anything I could possibly say. Certainly we cannot blame our failure to be American enough on reaction. Comrade Foster has hit upon, involuntarily perhaps, what I believe to be the heart of our problem. This tragic situation cannot be cured by a few

patches here and there as we have been doing for many years. It can only be solved by drastic and basic changes which I think the draft resolution begins to do.

ON MARXISM-LENINISM

The first change that is necessary is our approach to Marxist-Leninist theory. I voted with the majority of the National Committee to recommend to the convention that we delete the phrase "Marxism-Leninism" from the preamble to our Party constitution. I think this is necessary because the government has successfully made use of this phrase to distort what we American Communists really believe and stand for, to isolate us from the American people, and to virtually illegalize us. Instead of tying ourselves to a phrase which can so easily be distorted and misused against us, we need to spell out in our own language the theories we base ourselves on and our true program and policy. Does this mean throwing out and abandoning all the work of Marx, Engels and Lenin? Of course not. But if anyone asks me whether I base myself on the principles of Marx and Lenin, I want to be able to answer which of those principles I believe in and which I do not. Theory is the generalization of experience, and since experience is always changing, theory must change with it.

Science is a living and not a dead thing. Science that fails to develop

loses touch with reality and ceases to become a correct guide to action. The development of science requires the constant examination of ever-changing reality, and the testing of old concepts to see if they remain valid, need to be discarded or modified, or new concepts added. We who claim to be scientific socialists and are so critical of all other bodies of thought must have a critical approach to our own science and constantly review everything afresh.

To put it charitably, we have not always had such an attitude but sometimes tended to regard the Marxist classics as sacred scripture providing all answers for all problems for all time. In fact, the rigid, mechanical and insistent use of the term "Marxism-Leninism" can help to create the unscientific concept of the cult of the individual. We now realize how harmful it was to deify Stalin and consider him the fountainhead of all wisdom. It is just as wrong to attribute such qualities to Marx and Lenin even though they were better men than Stalin. All men, no matter how great their genius, are human beings and have historical limitations. Marx and Lenin were unquestioned geniuses. They founded and developed scientific socialism brilliantly, and it is correct in that sense to identify the science with their names, but it is also necessary to see that science must develop and inevitably go much further than its original founders. That any true science is always larger

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and broader, deeper and more profound than any individuals. To limit science to the discoveries of any particular individuals will automatically restrict its development and transform it into a lifeless dogma.

This was the approach of Marx and Lenin themselves. They were merciless opponents of all fixed and closed systems of thought, always insisted upon "studying all history afresh," and the necessity for the "concrete study of concrete reality" above everything else. Marx himself once cried out that "I am not a Marxist" in protest against those of his followers who slavishly and parrot-like repeated his doctrines as fixed formulas to solve all problems.

The idea that the doctrines of Marx and Lenin are unchangeable creates an atmosphere that suppresses the thought and debate which are essential for the development of science and correct policies. Those who object to the phrase in the resolution that we base ourselves on Marxist-Leninist principles "as we interpret them" make a serious mistake on two grounds in my opinion. First, if *we* do not interpret them in the light of present reality and our own understanding, they interpret themselves and become dogma, and second, if *we* do not interpret them it means we become dependent on the interpretation of others.

The issue consequently is not the abandonment of Marxist-Leninist theory, but the need for a critical re-evaluation and further develop-

ment of it. The issue is to determine what remains valid, such as the materialist conception of history, surplus value, the class struggle, the leading role of the working class in the struggle for Socialism, imperialism as capitalism in its monopoly, dying stage, the national and colonial question, for example, and what is no longer valid, such as the law of inevitable violent proletarian revolution, the inevitability of war, or needs to be modified, like the theory of the state, etc. This is a life and death necessity for us and we can accomplish it only by ceasing to regard Marxism-Leninism as something sacred, holy and inviolate.

ON THE USSR

The second change necessary concerns our approach to the Soviet Union. The historic role of the USSR in blazing the trail for Socialism, and in transforming the world situation to where lasting peace is now possible, has fully justified the high regard we have always had for the Soviet Union and its Communist Party. Humanity will be forever indebted to the Soviet Union for those services. We played our own modest part in bringing this about, and our defense of the Soviet Union against the efforts of world capitalism to destroy it by force has proved to be in the best patriotic interests of our country.

However, this correct and patriotic principle of international workers'

solidarity was seriously distorted by the development of unequal and one-sided relationships between the CPSU and other Communist Parties, especially during the period of Stalin's leadership. The great authority and prestige of the USSR as the pioneer socialist state turned into a concept of Soviet infallibility. This, and the idea that the Soviet Union was the only possible model for other countries, led both to an uncritical acceptance of Soviet mistakes, and to the wrong application in other countries of policies which may have been valid for the USSR but not necessarily for them.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU was a major and decisive contribution to opening the eyes of all Communists to the true state of affairs, and has helped to free us from the incorrect relationships between parties and the harmful ideas and practices within parties that had developed over many decades. International socialist solidarity has been put on a more sound and solid basis, and the cause of Socialism in general and within each country has greatly benefited.

The revelations of Stalin's mistakes and crimes, though shocking and brutal, and the process of correction by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since Stalin's death, have had a liberating effect on world Communism, in my opinion, and were absolutely essential for the further progress of Socialism not only in the USSR but everywhere.

They have laid the foundations for a new leap forward in healing the historic breach between Socialist and Communist Parties, the achievement of working-class unity in general, and important new successes in the fight for peace. They are making possible big new strides in socialist democracy, justice and morality which were seriously compromised under Stalin's leadership. They are helping each country to find and to travel its own national path to Socialism.

All this is a gigantic process which is not proceeding evenly and smoothly, but it is inexorable. There is no turning back from it. It will be facilitated and speeded to the extent that we learn the fullest lessons from the Stalin mistakes. The discussion precipitated by the 20th Congress in world Communist ranks was healthy and constructive. In my opinion it must be continued and developed further in order to extract the maximum benefits. The questions of many Communists concerning the adequacy of the explanations for Stalin's misleadership are fully justified. History is not made primarily by heroes or gods, nor by villains or devils. The violations of democracy and justice in the USSR cannot be explained by the deficiencies of Stalin alone. How could one man have achieved the power he did and why was a whole country powerless before him? How could such flagrant violations of socialist ideals take place for such a

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long time in a socialist country? I think the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU gave some of the explanations but by no means fully satisfactory ones. I consider its rebuke to Togliatti to be a disservice because more than any other Communist he was trying to get at the roots of the matter. It is a mistake to try to end the discussion. I welcome the corrective steps being taken by the Soviet Union, and especially the bold progress being made by the Polish, Chinese, Italian and other Communists.

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The great lesson we must learn is that the expansion of democracy is not automatic under Socialism but must be fought for. Socialism creates the material conditions for the fullest expansion of democracy, much higher than in the most advanced capitalist democracies, but it must be built just as socialist economy must be. Violations of democracy are not inherent in Socialism but on the contrary come into conflict with it and must be eliminated as is now taking place, but we also know now that neither is it inherent in Socialism that democracy cannot be suppressed, restricted and violated. Better controls by the people over their leaders and institutions must be devised than up until now in order to make impossible any future violations of democracy.

We Americans must guarantee

that American Socialism will be a fully democratic Socialism. I am confident we will be able to achieve that, partly as a result of the pioneering efforts and enormous sacrifices of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, partly because we will be on guard against repeating the mistakes of the Soviet Union if we master all the lessons of it, and especially because of our own more favorable circumstances and historical traditions.

FOR A CHANGED PARTY

The third change we must make is to build a different kind of a party. To make our most effective contribution to the achievement of the broadest type of American socialist democracy superior in every respect to our present democracy, requires the most democratic kind of Communist Party. The present concept of our Party may have been necessary for a period in which war was inevitable and peaceful constitutional transition impossible but this is no longer the case.

We are in a new era which requires new programs and forms of organization. In my view this requires that we take a new look at the concept of democratic centralism. Our experience has been the tendency for this to become transformed into maximum centralization and minimum democracy. Whether this is inherent in the concept or not I do not know but it very well may be. The essential thing at this time

is to make our Party fully democratic from top to bottom. I think it is necessary to separate democracy from centralism, else the former becomes subordinate to the latter. This is not to deny the need for centralism but it must be made subordinate to democracy. Democratic centralism apparently results in a semi-military type of organization which is clearly not valid for our country in this period.

Certainly we must have majority rule, as virtually every American organization has, but not the over-centralized form we now have. It is argued that super-centralization is essential in order to be effective but this is belied by the experience of other American organizations, many of which are quite effective without it. Naturally our organization must be based on a single ideology and the policies decided upon by the majority must be carried out by the organization. Organized factions and more than one center in the organization should not be permitted. But it is necessary to guarantee the right of dissent after policy has been adopted and while it is being carried out. Indeed, dissent must be protected at all times and not just in periods of pre-convention discussion. Democratic centralism has never permitted this. We need unity and discipline but this should flow from conviction as the result of vigorous democratic debate at all times, and not from compulsion as it has tended to do in the past.

In my opinion the name of the Party ought to be changed. I have no illusions that such a change will automatically and miraculously solve all of our problems, but if we make the serious changes described above, it will dramatize to the American people that our Party is making profound and genuine changes, and under such circumstances help us in the fight for legality, not only in the courts but more important in our relations with the American people.

I think too that we must give the most serious consideration to whether we should retain the party form of organization. Our resolution correctly states that this is not a matter of principle. Political principles are primary and forms of organization are subordinate to and flow from them. Form and structure of organization can vary greatly and must be determined by what can most effectively carry forward our political objectives under given circumstances. We are not a political party as the American people understand it. Political parties in America are electoral organizations primarily. We must admit we are not that today if we are honest with ourselves.

AGAINST DISSOLUTION

I think we have an important role to play in our country as an organized political force and have a special, vital and essential contribution to make. This is because of our scientific socialist ideology, our vast ex-

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perience both good and bad, and the thousands of able fighters for the interests of the people and Socialism we have educated. That is why I am opposed to dissolution. To disperse and disband the organized political force we represent would be a crime and a tragedy, and would set back the cause of Socialism in our country for a long time. There is no other political force in America that can provide the leadership we are capable of giving.

I regret exceedingly that men like Joseph Starobin have seen fit to sever relations with us. He represents those who feel we are finished, hopelessly compromised and in capable of making a serious change. I think he and others are profoundly mistaken, and that time will prove this. To leave the organization will not help to change it, and the same is true of many who are remaining in the organization but are standing on the sidelines waiting to see what will happen. While I think that Starobin and others like him have taken a wrong step, we must recognize that it represents a vote of non-confidence in us and constitutes a most serious challenge. We must prove by our deeds that they were mistaken. I am confident this will happen. Meanwhile, I do not think that Starobin and those like him are lost to the cause of Socialism, but will continue to contribute to it in their own way and I believe that in the end we will be re-united.

The political force that we are

must be maintained, strengthened and built. I think we can do this most effectively if we change our party form to one of a political action association. I do not favor our becoming a socialist educational society which conducts abstract education for Socialism isolated from the struggles of the workers and their allies. Whatever form we finally decide upon, we must be a socialist working class organization which bases itself on scientific Socialism, participates in and strives to give leadership, in the new ways required by the present situation, to the immediate struggles of the people, and to educate for Socialism on the basis of those struggles.

I am not for making such a change abruptly, and I doubt whether the question will be sufficiently clarified by the time of our February convention, but I do think we need the most serious debate in our Party on the matter. I hope it will not become an emotional debate with charges of Browderism, etc. I think our big mistake under Browder was not the formation of the Communist Political Association but the wrong content we put into it, namely the mistaken concepts of progressive capitalism and postwar national unity. The formation of a political action association with a correct program will, in my opinion, be a great forward step, more in line with the modest role we actually play in the country, facilitate the improvement of our relations with the labor move-

ment and other people's organizations, help to legalize our status, and enable us to play a more influential role in the affairs of our nation.

SIGNS OF SOCIALIST REVIVAL

I think too it will help us make a greater contribution to the eventual achievement of a new united party of Socialism. This idea is one of the most important in the resolution. I believe it is rooted in American reality. There are definite signs of socialist revival in the country, although far from being a mass upsurge as yet. Nor is it true that these socialist stirrings are only among isolated and sectarian intellectual groupings and publications. In the first place they exist in the labor movement. The hundreds of thousands of workers who passed through our ranks, the millions who once voted socialist, are still in the unions, and new workers are beginning to come to Socialism. They will not and cannot come to us at present, and ways must be found, parallel with our efforts to strengthen our own organization, to help bring into being new forms of organization, independent of us, which can provide expression for the grow-

ing body of socialist-minded people in the first place, workers.

I do not agree with those who say the slogan of a new united party of Socialism should be de-emphasized and put on the shelf. In actuality this would mean to discard it and not to work seriously for it. Of course it will not come about overnight, but we must be foremost in working for socialist unity, especially since we have a distinctive contribution to make to it as American Marxists.

The test as to whether we shall succeed in becoming a truly independent American working-class organization dedicated to the immediate struggles of the American people and Socialism lies right now in the kind of atmosphere we develop in the discussion, and ultimately of course in the policies we adopt. If we develop an atmosphere of respect for and consideration of each other's views on their merits, do not stifle the discussion, avoid name-calling and emotionalism, learn how to live together in the same Party despite differing and opposing views, and increase our mass work as we discuss, I think we will make significant headway. I am confident that such will be the case, and that our Party will emerge strengthened and in a better position to go forward.

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On a New United Party of Socialism*

By Steve Nelson

THE QUESTION OF A united party of Socialism has provoked wide discussion in and out of our Party ranks. The Draft Resolution, where this question is again raised, will no doubt further stimulate interest in it in our ranks and among socialist-minded groups.

In the discussion so far, besides those who support this proposal, the following views have been expressed.

1. There are those who say that it was a mistake to have raised this question. They argue: There are no major socialist currents in the U.S.A. outside of the C.P. The Socialist Party is small and isolated, even more than we are. Its position is to have no contact with the Communist Party. Other Left groups are small and also isolated. Thus, they say, to raise the question now only creates doubts in our Party's future.

2. The editors of the *Monthly Review* and *New Republic* urge the immediate dissolution of the Communist Party. Joseph Starobin's view is nearly the same.

3. There is a trend that urges the dissolution of the Communist Party and the setting up of a loose social-

ist federation made up of all groups, agreeable to merger, though they differ on many key questions.

There may be other trends not noted by me, but in my judgment each is limited or is harmful and ought to be rejected, though, because of this, it should not be automatically excluded from further discussion and consideration.

The first view is harmful because it does not see any need for basic discussion of policies or for more appropriate concepts of organization suited to American conditions. This view refuses to concede that there were any serious mistakes in policy and that there ever could have been anything wrong with our organizational concepts. Those who take this view tend to play down the present discussion in the world Communist movement and treat it as a surface phenomenon. They apparently draw the conclusion that no fundamental problems are to be reconsidered anew. Everything in the past is taken for granted as if everything was answered for all time.

* See also: Eugene Dennis: "For a Mass Party of Socialism," in *Political Affairs*, June, 1956; and Nemmy Sparks, "Towards a United Party of Socialism," in the issue of July, 1956—Ed.

There are some in our Party who are afraid to examine the causes of our errors in the most fundamental way. They tend to treat them superficially and, therefore, will not provide answers to our problems.

Despite the Stalin distortions of Marxism-Leninism, some people fear to probe more deeply under the surface and search for the causes that led to these errors beyond contenting themselves with the phrase, "cult of the individual." It is evident that Stalin distorted Marxism-Leninism and its theory and concept of organization while supposedly defending it. One of the chief instruments in his hands which permitted this distortion to develop to an almost uncontrollable stage was the concept of monolithic unity of the Party. He justified the attack against all who raised questions and their eventual physical extermination by a demand for submission without question. Democratic centralism permitted him to eliminate the democratic process of the election of leaders and examination of policies by arbitrary replacement of those he did not agree with by co-option of others. Thus, Party Congresses became less frequent, grew further and further apart.

These inner Party methods were transferred to the government apparatus and to every phase of political life in the Soviet Union. Thus, we see that this principle, designed for an underground condition in Tsarist Russia, when held

onto intact, without any change, led to crimes under Socialism and socialist democracy suffered. In my judgment, on further examination, history will show that these theoretical and organizational concepts were distorted in the USSR and the other parties as well. It should have been the duty of those in leadership to guard against this danger, to institute more democracy in the Party and the country with the advent of Socialism, instead of justifying its limitations, as was done by Stalin.

It would be well to re-examine the remarks made in 1918 by Rosa Luxembourg:

The suppression of political life throughout the country must gradually cause the vitality of the Soviets themselves to decline. Without general elections, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech, life in every public institution slows down, becomes a caricature of itself, and bureaucracy rises as the only deciding factor. No one can escape the workings of this law. Public life gradually dies, and a few dozen Party leaders with inexhaustible energy and limitless idealism direct and rule. . . . In the last resort cliquism develops a dictatorship of the proletariat; the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, *i.e.*, a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in a Jacobin sense, results.

What the other Parties will do in different situations about this matter will depend on their skill and on their needs. It is not up to us to answer how it is to be applied in

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other countries, but it is clear, it seems to me, that for us in the United States the monolithic concept of the Party is wrong, was never right and contributed to much of our sectarianism. Unless we change the monolithic concept, we are not going to be prepared to develop a true working-class Party that will operate on American traditions and concepts. If we do not, all the talk about our favoring the democratic process in establishing Socialism, recognition of the existence of other political parties in the U.S.A., is meaningless. As long as we cling, as some suggest, to the old concept, we in fact tell others that we believe in one-party rule and that we fear the full development of democracy within the Party itself.

They are wrong who think they are defending Marxism-Leninism by retaining the outmoded concepts of organization which brought great harm even in socialist countries, not only because they were "misused," as some claim, but because a correct concept for underground conditions, was wrong under new and changed conditions. This should be an elementary truism for us and no amount of clamor that to consider changes means "distortion" or "revisionism" should distract us from searching for a proper concept of a Marxist working-class Party in the United States. Unless we combat this dogmatic view, we play into the hands of those who have lost hope of our being able to change ourselves and, there-

fore, it only strengthens the Right danger.

The second view, advanced by the *Monthly Review* and *New Republic*, and echoed by Starobin, is also unsound. Their arguments are: The Communist Party in the USA is isolated. It is "hopelessly compromised" in the eyes of the people because of the Smith Act convictions. It is so rigid in its theory and tactics that it cannot change.

That we are isolated is true. We are searching for the reasons for our isolation and I am sure we will find the reasons and make the corrections. I am especially strengthened in this conviction that a more basic change can be made in our movement because of the truly historic discussion which has been opened up throughout the world Communist and Socialist movements as a result of the events and problems raised in the aftermath of the 20th Congress. Already, steps have been taken to heal the breach between the Communists and Socialists in some countries. This process must and will continue. We must discuss errors and wrong policies which continue the breach and take steps to overcome them. Now the past can be assessed more objectively and lessons from our own country can be more sharply drawn without any encumbrances from preconceived dogmas of the past. The discussions going on now in the pages of the *Daily* and *Sunday Worker* and elsewhere are a good indication that most

fundamental questions are being raised even though the discussion has just begun. Undoubtedly between now and the Party convention, much more depth will be added to questions which are raised lightly so far.

The various proposals made to change the concept of the Party, would have been unthinkable if not for the present world discussion. Can such an approach to problems be dismissed lightly by serious people? This new approach gives us confidence that this is not "just another discussion." It would be good if our non-Communist friends and believers in Socialism would re-assess their hurried estimate of our discussion, especially in the face of this new situation.

While red-baiting and persecutions had serious effects on our status, our problem does not stem mainly from red-baiting. Serious advocates of Socialism have learned to expect that. The problem is that *our policies were wrong, which made it easier for the McCarthyites to isolate us from the masses.*

At the same time, it may be worthwhile to call to the attention of those who attach so much importance to the matter of being "hopelessly compromised" that *other socialist groups did not grow even though they were not so "hopelessly compromised" as we were.* This applies to the Socialist Party and other "anti-communist Socialists" and radicals.

It is somewhat surprising that such

an argument should be made, especially by people who themselves felt the fury of the smear technique.

The argument that we are "hopelessly compromised" forgets both world history and our own experience, for it is certain that the capitalists who will ultimately have to face the loss of their industries to socialist ownership will find new epithets for their socialist adversaries, every day of the week. Those who are so overwhelmed by the argument that we were so "hopelessly compromised" because of the Smith Act convictions fail to appreciate fully the meaning of McCarthyism. They fail to see how even non-communists and anti-communists became victims of this smear and were called unpatriotic just as we were. Had the American people accepted this view, there would have been no opposition to McCarthyism as it finally developed. Therefore, this argument ought to be discarded by well-meaning people of the *Monthly Review* and others who think like them.

Why, may I ask, should anyone accept the advice to dissolve the Communist Party? For this country with its tremendous working class can be without an organization which is based on the working class and on basic Marxist principles is unthinkable.

All friends of Socialism would do better if they pitched into the discussion, suggested changes in policy program and structure. This would do more good than to stand on the

side and offer advice to us to dissolve.

Then, how about conducting a bit of their own self-examination and answer to themselves how far they have travelled and what goals they attained, why did they make so little progress? This would deepen the discussion and help all those interested in Socialism.

The group that advocates the dissolution of our Party and the organization of a federation of socialist groups is also harmful and unclear in its outlook. By dissolving, how can a discussion be conducted? Or is there no need of clarity on program, outlook and organization?

What policies should the federated movement follow? What will be its electoral policy? Will the Socialist Party take the initiative to organize the federation and will it, as presently constituted, call for a socialist election policy which will be in the tradition of the Socialist Party in recent years—away from the mainstream of labor and the Negro people's movement, doing just what should not be done? There can be no merger, nor talk of federation without clarity on a basic outlook. This is what the whole Left should pay attention to.

One can point to a number of other wrong policies or practices of the Socialist Party which would stand uncorrected. The so-called federation would be without any substance unless various questions of policy and organization as well

as theoretical questions were hammered out in this interim period. I see a major role for Communist Party members to play, not by sitting it out but by changing ourselves while we are urging others to change, before a new party of Socialism can be set up.

From the present discussion and criticism in the world Communist movement of the errors committed under Stalin's leadership in the USSR, none should conclude that those who supported the Soviet Union from its inception were wrong.

To those of us who supported the USSR in its effort to build the first socialist state in the world, its tremendous sacrifices toward the defeat of world fascism were fully justified. The USSR played the chief role in inspiring other peoples to establish Socialism in their countries. The USSR fired the spirit of struggle of the colonial people for freedom. True, errors were committed in the USSR in this period but in spite of that, the positive things remain. Today the socialist gains in the world are firmly established. There is no danger that world reaction could destroy the socialist states. Now we can all participate in comradely public discussion with the socialist countries in correcting such errors as need to be corrected. Now there is something to discuss, *for there are nearly a score of Socialist countries and the Soviet Union!* Our criticism and suggestions and advice as friends

of the USSR and socialist lands can be welcomed and not looked upon as the destructive criticism of its mortal enemies. Therefore, those socialists who equated the USSR with Nazi Germany ought to examine their position and square it with true socialist internationalism. Until then, the open sore will not heal and there will be no progress on united action or unity.

On domestic questions, some of these follow a go-it-alone electoral policy but that is, in more extreme form, the mistake we made in the last ten years and do not intend returning to. There should be a re-examination of one's own movement and its policies in the past and a working out of a clear-cut program for the future on the part of all who enter this discussion. We hope that others will examine their own mistakes and learn from them. We, on our part, will discuss and correct our mistakes as we made them.

Even though the matter of organizing a mass party of Socialism is some distance away, we need not fear entering the discussion of this question, both in the ranks of our movement and outside. Our raising of the question now helps to break up and unfreeze the situation which has remained solid for more than 30 years, dating back to the founding of the Communist movement in America and the break between the Socialists and the Communists after the first World War. I am confident that this question will bring forward

much good as a result of the world discussion. The results will mean a new milestone towards Socialism on a world scale.

Before there can be talk of unity there must be clarity among the forces of the Left on the following questions, at least: (1) The concept of the American road to Socialism. We for our part have been working on this proposition for a number of years and should now throw it into the discussion and hear others' views on the matter. (2) The American party of Socialism must be based on the class struggle and adhere to fundamental Marxist principles. Here, a deep study should be made of present day American realities, the economic situation, political questions, deep study of our history, concept of the Party and structure, tactics in relation to the elections and legislative struggle, program on the Negro question, attitude toward the trade union movement, etc.

On as many practical questions as it is possible to reach agreement the entire Left should get into the struggle, united even if on parallel lines, directing its attack against the monopolies, and keeping divisive questions out as much as possible. On basic questions, we should get into the deepest discussion and polemics, but without the old fashioned name-calling.

Those who put forward the proposal that we dissolve our Party seem not to have a clear idea of what

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wanted on this question. They come forward with vague ideas of some type of "from the top operation." Others in this group come forward with a proposal to build a Fabian movement in the U.S.

I think the Left ought to welcome the formation of a Fabian or similar movement in the U.S. It would be a forward step if an American version of a Fabian movement developed in the universities and colleges of this country, reaching into intellectual and professional circles and into the labor movement. Discussions on various aspects of Socialism amongst these groups would be most stimulating and would have a tremendous effect on advancing socialist ideas.

Prior to this discussion, I would have probably felt that this is in direct competition with the Communist Party, and therefore might have opposed it. Yet, today I would be happy with its development. But is this the Socialist movement we are discussing that we need in the U.S.? No, it is not. We must strive to build a mass socialist movement which is based on the labor movement. Such a movement cannot be created by our abandoning the field and burying 35 years of experience and depending on some automatic spring which will give it impetus. This movement must be stimulated by those who believe in it, while correcting its own errors. It is unfortunate that the official views of the Socialist Party of America are

violently opposed at this stage to any discussion of merger. While our own actions in the past may be the cause for the present position of some SP members, it is clear that they are influenced by short-sighted considerations towards us. It is hoped that this discussion will not bypass them and that there will be Socialists who will enter this discussion constructively.

We, on our part, should not draw any satisfaction out of the fact that the SP is small or non-existent in many places. We should remember the deep traditions of Socialism in America which go beyond party ranks and labels; if there is to be an eventual merger of the Left, it is an important group to consider.

This discussion is taking place at a very stimulating moment. Trade unions have been established in our mass production industries. The craft divisions of the past are being healed so that there is one solid powerful trade-union movement which can in the next few years make tremendous strides in further organization of the unorganized and reach greater maturity on political action and legislative struggle and in the fight for civil and Negro rights. Whatever may be the differences in the trade-union movement, already there is a greater unity on political action than there was in the days of William Green. With all the limitations of the trade unions today, they have for the first time taken a deep interest in the struggle

of the Negro people for their full citizenship and are paying close attention to the predicament of the American farmer and even small business.

This powerful trade-union movement is going to face the problems of automation and nationalization of industries and willy-nilly will have to think of public ownership, varied reforms and Socialism as well. If the present Left makes itself a part of this mass trade-union movement and the Negro movement and the farmers and does not attempt to run ahead of events as we have done time and again in the past, then we will be in the middle of the new current which will add the basic substance to the movement of American Socialism.

No group should throw its weight around in this discussion. All arguments should be heard before conclusions are drawn by anyone, including those who say "liquidate," whether they are in or out of our ranks. Our movement must keep together and help shape policies to fit the new perspectives.

To those who say that we have not shown the ability to correct our mistakes since we made so many of them and so often and who therefore counsel dissolution, I offer the following argument and example against it. The Chinese Communists made a series of Leftist errors and followed a super-Leftist policy from 1927 to 1933. They had at that time put forward the slogan "For Soviet

China." The policy in respect to the peasantry was couched in terms of Stalin's formula, "Unity with the poor peasants with the main blow against the middle peasants and the liberal bourgeoisie." Some of the same leaders of the CP of China who followed this policy, re-examined this line after a series of military defeats, forced the abandonment in 1932 of the last of the Soviet districts in Fukien province. Most of the same leaders who followed this erroneous policy examined its error in a self-critical way, reversed their previous policy of "Soviets for China" and raised the banner of an anti-imperialist struggle and unity of all who wanted to save China for the Chinese people.

Life shows that the very same leaders who were previously wrong were able to correct themselves. While I do not wish to ascribe to ourselves and certainly not to myself the virtues of the Chinese Communists, I do think that those who counsel dissolution should help move in this direction rather than to abandon the field in despair and wait for historical accident to fill the vacuum.

There are no miracles that will lead us out of the present situation. No liberal-socialist brain trust is the answer. Nor is the notion to dissolve our Party the answer. Nor is premature merger the answer. Deep and self-critical examination of our past policies to see that they are designed for American conditions, cleansing the doctrinaire approach

to America, should be our approach to this discussion.

We should reject in unmistakable terms the advice, no matter from what quarter it comes, to dissolve our movement. Those who counsel dissolution of the Party should instead throw themselves into the discussion and join hands in the common struggle against the monopolies on issues on which we are in basic agreement. The open sores of the past will heal much more rapidly in such an atmosphere of cooperation and discussion.

The result of such participation on the part of all those who are moving in the same basic direction will answer many questions that are unclear now as to how and when

the conditions will be ripe for the formation of the new party. For the moment one thing is clear: just because all the conditions are not ripe for the formation of such a Party, dissolving our organization is no solution. In spite of many weaknesses, our Party's record can compare well with any group in America as to its contribution to the struggle of the American people, workers, Negroes and common people generally. We must participate in the struggles which are before us, as history has not adjourned them to the debating societies and lecture room for intellectual discussions. In this struggle the basis for any new organization can best be laid.

THE STALIN ERA

by **Anna Louise Strong**

Only Anna Louise Strong could have written this book. There are few in America today who can speak with greater authority about "the Stalin Era," or with closer or more intimate knowledge of its inner workings and motivations.

She went there in 1921 to help bring relief from the American Friends Service to the Volga famine sufferers. She was there during the agonizing years when, seemingly by sheer will, the Soviet people lifted their vast country out of the mire of medievalism into the front rank among modern nations. She was there, as founder and editor of "Moscow News," checking the daily progress of industrialization, the collectivization of agriculture, the building of new cities, the release of ancient cultures. She was there during "the Great Madness" following the assassination of Sergei Kirov, observing from only a few feet away the trials of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and others, listening to their confessions and rationalizations. She was there when the Mannerheim Line was broken in the Soviet-Finnish War, and she was there to watch the Soviet Armies thwart Hitler's design to seize Latvia, Lithuania and Esthonia. She was there, also, during World War II, when Poland was liberated, and the final seizure of Berlin completed under the assault of the Red Army.

She met Stalin face to face, and saw his methods in group discussion. She interviewed scores of the foremost leaders of the Soviet Union, China, and other countries.

In 1949, this great American woman, a lifelong friend of the Soviet Union and staunch advocate of American-Soviet collaboration for peace, was denounced as a spy by the GPU and expelled from the USSR. This would have embittered anyone less serenely conscious of complete innocence, or less sure of eventual exoneration. In 1955, following the long series of revelations of criminal frameups of innocent people, in both high and low places in the Soviet Union, by the political police, the Soviet Government publicly withdrew its accusation and vindicated Miss Strong.

Rising above any subjective feelings, the author of this book has given us the history of one of the most dynamic and world-changing eras of history, as she saw it and endured it, from the matchless creative urge of the Five-Year Plans to what she has called "The Great Madness" in the late thirties, and to the death of Stalin and after.

No American, concerned with the future of his country and of the world, can afford to miss this vital and timely book.

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