

# political affairs

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# political affairs

*A Theoretical and Political Magazine of Scientific Socialism*

Editor: V. J. Jerome

## Facing the 85th Congress\*

By National Committee, CPUSA

THE 85TH CONGRESS will convene January 3, 1957. For labor and its allies, the Negro people, the small farmers and small business and professional people, it marks a new stage in the fight for peace, economic security and equal rights. It is, in a very deep sense, a continuation of the struggles of the election campaign concluded last November.

Labor and its political allies, by rallying their growing independent strength in a non-partisan drive for their legislative demands, can play a major part in writing the record of the coming session.

On its opening day the Senate will face a popular demand to curb the Dixiecrat filibusterers by amending Rule 22. A simple majority can amend this infamous rule if the new Senate and Vice President Nixon, its presiding officer, wish to do so. But this majority can be produced only if the labor movement, Negro people's organizations and other democratic civic groups throw their full membership into a whirlwind campaign to effect this end.

The more effective the struggle to amend Rule 22, the more possible will it become to broaden the fight in Congress against Eastland and for full legislative backing to the Negro people, North and South, in the exercise of their right to vote, to work and to live free from discrimination and Dixiecrat violence.

While the civil rights struggle remains the No. 1 issue of domestic affairs, world peace remains the underlying chief concern of the American people. This profound concern has been heightened by the Middle East crisis and the efforts of the Knowlands, McCarthys and Eastlands to exploit the tragic events in Hungary in order to rekindle the cold war.

At home our people are plagued by an ever-mounting cost of living and a crushing tax burden. The National Association of Manufacturers threatens a new drive on labor's political and economic rights. A continued failure to meet the precarious

\* This statement was released on December 19, 1956.—Ed.

position of the small farmer and prolonged drought in some areas leave the farmers in a mood of deep dissatisfaction. Small business is demanding relief from the intolerable pressure of the monopolies.

The post-election hearings of the Eastland and Walter committees are a shocking reminder that McCarthyites in Congress are still hacking away at the Bill of Rights.

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Once again, as in past years, the anti-labor coalition of reactionary Republicans and conservative Democrats will be in the saddle in the new Congress. Labor and its allies must reckon soberly with the fact that two-thirds of the Congressional committees are headed by Southern Democrats, some of them of the Dixiecrat stripe, and that the effective Congressional leadership is in the hands of Senator Lyndon Johnson and Rep. Samuel Rayburn, both conservative Democrats with strong ties to Texas oil monopolies.

But the set-up of the 85th Congress does not mean that Congress will be able to forget that it was chosen in an election in which more than 61 million Americans, despite the obstacles of the two-party system, manifested their deep concern for peace and progress. The desire of the electorate for peace was expressed in their landslide vote for Eisenhower, particularly after his pledge of "non-involvement" in the Middle East. Their desire for progress was expressed in denying the

Republican Party, the party of the Cadillac Cabinet, a majority in Congress.

The Negro voters again demonstrated their deep political awareness. The substantial shift of Negro voters from the Democratic Party was their form of rebuke of Eastlandism; their support of labor-backed Democratic Congressional candidates was their form of maintaining the historic alliance with labor to advance the welfare of the people.

Organized labor, in alliance with the Negro people and the small farmers, strongly influenced the election returns, particularly in the congressional races. Such was the case in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Oregon and in the farm belt. The activities of labor's Committee for Political Education in the first political campaign since AFL-CIO unity gave organized labor new political power and foreshadows the type of aggressive legislative activity that labor and its allies must carry on in the 85th Congress.

At the same time, the defeat of Stevenson and the failure to make any substantial inroads on the GOP-Dixiecrat bloc in Congress, have given rise to considerable self-examination on the part of organized labor. As the unions seek the reasons for these failures, we believe they will find them in labor's inadequate approach to four main questions: peace, the Dixiecrat question, the anti-monopoly struggle and strengthening labor's independent

political action. The political progress of labor and its coalition allies—the Negro people, the farmers, the small businessmen—will depend on the answers to these questions.

Great headway could be made in Congress and in '58 and '60, were labor to develop its own positive peace program based on a settled national policy of peaceful negotiations and peaceful coexistence, expanded world trade, an end to H-bomb tests and the peace-time draft and a shift of the swollen arms program to peace-time production, with the emphasis on housing, schools, hospitals, roads, new TVA's and a series of nationalized atomic energy plants.

Labor also needs, in alliance with the Negro people, to lead an uncompromising fight for a full civil rights program and for a decisive break with the Dixiecrats by all political forces supported by labor.

It needs to put forth a more rounded-out anti-monopoly program that will win the support of the farmers, small business, white collar and professional people.

It needs to place ever-increasing emphasis on year-round independent labor political organization in the communities and the shops, on closer ties with its allies and on a grass-roots, non-partisan approach to legislative activity.

With the opening of Congress and President Eisenhower's State of the Union message, the opportunity will be presented for labor, the Negro people and all other independent

political forces to advance their programs on the main issues of the hour.

Along with civil rights, questions of foreign policy will be very much to the fore in Congress. The Middle East crisis makes it imperative that our government be urged to renew the process of peaceful negotiation at the summit, as the Swiss Government has proposed. The time has come for serious consideration of the proposal, advanced by the Soviet Government and powerful sections of public opinion in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from all countries, the neutralization and unification of Germany and an all-European security agreement. It is also high-time to strengthen the UN by the admission of the People's Republic of China.

Especially is it necessary for labor and its allies to fight the efforts of the Knowlands, McCarthys and Eastlands to exploit the Hungarian events in order to whip up a war spirit and destroy completely the spirit of Geneva. As part of an overall foreign aid program, loans and grants should be extended without strings attached to newly-liberated semi-colonial countries as well as to Socialist countries, like Poland, now seeking such business-like arrangements.

Labor will undoubtedly press in the next Congress, as it did in the election campaign, for its comprehensive program of social and economic legislation. This program, re-

flected in part in Stevenson's "New America" projections, was one of the most important features of the '56 campaign and deserves the fullest support.

This program includes tax relief for those in the lower brackets, raising the level and extending the coverage of the minimum wage law, increased social security benefits, and income parity and other farm legislation demanded by the family-type farmer. The sharp rise in the cost of living underscores the need for such measures and makes timely labor's demand that Congress investigate the monopolies.

The unions and other major people's organizations, in their own interests, need to raise the demand for repeal not only of the Taft-Hartley Act, but of the McCarran-Walter, McCarran, Smith and all other witch-hunt legislation as well. The restoration of the Bill of Rights likewise calls for amnesty for Smith Act and other political prisoners.

Together, these issues in and around the coming session of Congress constitute basic elements of an anti-monopoly program as against the reactionary policies of Nixon, the Cadillac Cabinet and the Dixiecrats. The legislative struggles on these issues in Congress—and their counterparts in the State Legislatures and City councils—are an indispensable basis for the eventual development in our country of a great labor and people's political alliance against the trusts.

If labor continues to extend the independent organization and activity shown in the '56 campaign and if it helps to organize a many-sided mass movement for the urgent needs of the people, it will profoundly influence the new Congress.

To the fight for such a people's program and movement, the Communists of the United States are dedicated. We will cooperate with all supporters of the labor movement to help effect these aims.

## On Social Democracy in the U. S.

### A CP Sub-Committee Report

IN MOST of our Party's material there is repeated emphasis on the decline of Social-Democracy and the victory of the Communists in the world labor movement. There is much truth in this. But we would be making a very serious mistake if we were to underestimate the influence of Social-Democracy, or reformism in general, or neglected to consider how it particularly expresses itself in the United States.

It is true that the Communists make up not only the sole or leading Party in the lands of Socialism, but also major parties or significant mass parties in countries like France and Italy in Europe, Indonesia and India in Asia, and even in such countries of Latin America as Brazil.

Yet it is also true that the Social-Democratic parties are the main parties of the working class in countries like Britain, West Germany, Holland, Belgium, the Scandinavian countries, and Australia, where they also dominate the trade-union movement; while in countries like Italy and France, where the trade unions are split, these parties are strong, though different in character in some

countries, as for example the Saragat group and the Nenni Socialists in Italy. The Social-Democratic Party is also a mass party and the main party of the working class in Japan, and there are reformist parties in a whole number of countries in Asia and in Africa. In the United States, while we have no mass Social-Democratic party, nevertheless reformism does dominate our growing labor movement.

It is clear, therefore, that Social-Democracy, nearly four decades after the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Communist Parties, remains a force not to be ignored in the capitalist world. It did not disintegrate, it did not disappear, although changes of all kinds undoubtedly took place, and are continuing to take place. Here too, in regard to these changes, dogmatism and doctrinarism will not help. We must study what is new and concrete in the situation. We have seen in a number of countries, in given specific circumstances, the merger of Social-Democratic Parties with Communist Parties, as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Hungary. We know the specific role

of the Nenni Socialists in Italy, which is not entirely the same as the Social-Democratic Party in other countries. In some respects this is also true of the united party of socialists in Japan — following the merger of the two socialist parties. We know of the differentiation in the British Labor Party, the role of the forces led by Bevan, the role of such leaders as Cole. *In fact, under the new conditions and the new situation, new possibilities exist now for new relations and the question becomes very important for us to establish where we and Social-Democrats agree and where we disagree and what the possibilities are with regard to united action, with regard to cooperation of all kinds, and with regard to a united party of Socialism.*

#### NEED FOR NEW APPROACH

Most of us are agreed that we need a new approach to the question of Social-Democracy, but we may not all agree on what this approach should be. There is the tendency which maintains that there is nothing new, so that some comrades constantly repeat the old formulas about Social-Democracy, its character and its role. This is, of course, a tendency which will not be very difficult to defeat. Life itself is already doing that, and we find from our experience that we can cope with that.

On the other hand, there has de-

veloped a position—we are not sure how widespread—that there are already practically no differences between us and Social-Democracy. This tendency falls into two categories. Some say that this is so because of the new world situation and new relations of forces and the new concept which we have developed in regard to the peaceful transition to Socialism, etc. There are also others who take the position that not only are there no differences of any consequence, but that there never should have been a split in the first place. We refer now not to the split in any particular country, but in general, on a world scale. We will deal with this a little later, but this is not the most difficult question which we shall be compelled to deal with, for it is not difficult to prove it wrong.

We think the most important question will be the following: There will be comrades who agree that there is something new, that we need a new approach, but it will be limited in practice in these comrades' thinking merely to the need for more skillful methods of exposing Social-Democracy; that just as we are now using less sectarian methods in general, we should also have a less sectarian approach to this question. *But this limiting of the problem to one of better tactics is not merely inadequate, but fails to see what is new in the situation, and is absolutely wrong.* It will not lead us to the kind of approach which is necessary. We must see that

even though there are obviously differences between us and Social-Democracy, these differences have a history, and they will remain with us for some time. There have been many new things, new possibilities, that have a direct and immediate bearing on all our work, not only in the daily tasks, not only in regard to the basic aims we place before ourselves in the building of an anti-monopoly coalition, but also in relation to our socialist objectives, and the perspective for a United Marxist Party in our country. Those who continue to repeat the old phrases of "labor lieutenants of imperialism," who always speak of the Meanys and Reuthers along with the Charles E. Wilsons, Dulleses, etc. are not only following narrow, sectarian, self-defeating tactics, but are in fact theoretically and politically wrong. And since this line is put forward and defended in the name of Marxism-Leninism, let us listen to these words from "*Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*":

The petty-bourgeois Democrats (including the Mensheviks), invariably vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between bourgeois democracy and the Soviet system, between reformism and revolutionariness, between love of the workers and fear of the proletarian dictatorship. The proper tactics for the Communists to adopt is to *utilize* these vacillations and not to ignore them; and utilizing them calls for concessions to those elements which are turning towards the proletariat . . . while simultaneously fighting

those who turn toward the bourgeoisie.

Obviously the above was also written in a specific and concrete situation and should not be viewed as dogma or doctrine. The only reason it is brought forth is to show that the one-sided view of one aspect of Lenin's characterization of Social-Democracy, namely "labor lieutenants of imperialism," at one time in a given situation, which is held by some comrades even today, was never correct. It was not a Leninist position. Simply to keep repeating "labor lieutenants of imperialism" and to attack everybody and make them the main enemy is wrong and alienates us from the masses.

#### DIFFERENCES WITH SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

We turn now to another question: Do we and the Social-Democrats stand on the same platform? Politically, ideologically? Here we do not refer to the Nenni Socialists, or to a Cole, or in our country, people like Muste. Nor do we refer to people around the *Monthly Review* and similar groups with whom we have much in agreement. It is important to have a correct approach to what is generally called reformism, that is, Social-Democracy as it is today practiced through its main organizations and leaderships particularly in countries like Britain, West Germany, France and those who occupy the same position in the political spectrum in our country. We know that

Social-Democracy or reformism, the reformist trend in the labor movement, matured in the era of imperialism and in the first place essentially reflects the rise of a labor aristocracy, the privileged section of the working class in certain privileged nations. It continues to this day, and challenges scientific socialism as put forward by Marx and Engels; it is certainly hostile to Marxism and it has been further developed in the era of imperialism.

Today, taking the official position of these organizations, we certainly have many differences with them. Not unimportant is the different view on dialectical materialism. The more we study today the history of the Chinese party, the more we can see in our own country that we will never develop fully our own independent approach to Socialism, our own independent approach to problems of our working class until we master more thoroughly the philosophy of our movement—dialectical materialism.

One of the reasons many of us, leaders and rank-and-file comrades, find it hard to keep their bearings today is because they feel everything is lost. Now it is true there are many new things and we shouldn't be afraid to face them. But there are certain things which are basic, certain approaches to society, a certain approach to the whole concept of the development of the world, of humanity and of how knowledge develops. The history of the Chinese Communist Party shows that masses

can master these and not only a few, not only a small group of intellectuals. This is true, if it is brought down to earth on the basis of experience which these masses can grasp.

But these Social-Democratic parties do not stand on historical and dialectical materialism. Eclecticism is the common denominator of their philosophy and includes many different philosophies and religious approaches, empiricism probably being predominant. We know for example that the concept of class struggle, which used to be elementary, is no longer accepted everywhere, even formally. And in one form or another class collaboration is the dominant approach. We know that there are differences with regard to internationalism, the colonial question, the national question in general, the agrarian question, on imperialist war, the role of the working class and the concept of allies of the working class, not to talk of their challenge to our conception—where they still formally profess belief in Socialism—that Socialism is not simply a series of capitalist reforms but a radical reorganization of society. The difference is not solely upon how we are going to arrive at Socialism. And on this question, in my opinion we very often fail to fully and convincingly win over our comrades to the new conceptions which we have tried to develop over the years and which the world movement has now accepted, because we confused very often our position

with the parliamentary road the Social Democrats talked about and which has as yet nowhere led to the establishment of Socialism.

In our conception of the peaceful and constitutional road to Socialism, the transformation of parliament into a real people's parliament is necessary. We view this as occurring on the basis of the struggle of the working class and its allies, which creates the conditions to make such a majority possible, which creates the climate where other classes can be affected, won over, or neutralized. We see the possibilities of containing or restraining violence on the part of the bourgeoisie—which will never like the situation—through the strong movements which will bring into being the conditions for this peaceful transition and which will enforce it by strength, by its vigilance, by its fight for this goal. All this shows that while we have much in common with Social Democracy, and this must be emphasized, many fundamental differences remain.

#### THE SPLIT DURING WORLD WAR I

Now, as regards those who believe the split following the First World War was a mistake. The history of Social Democracy immediately preceding and during the first World War, proves that the Second International was destroyed, not by the Communists or anybody else, but by the policy it pursued and which was proven utterly bankrupt. The Octo-

ber Revolution and the attitude towards the revolution which was developing in Central Europe at that time further sharpened the crisis in Social Democracy and exposed its policies. When we examine those questions we see that what we have today which creates the new world relationship, the new concepts, the possibility of peaceful transition and the fact that wars are no longer inevitable, would have been impossible had there not been this struggle against reformism, this birth of the Communist movement and parties and the carrying forward of this struggle along the lines that developed during and immediately preceding the first World War and the revolutions.

In saying this we do not want to say that no mistakes were made in premature splits. We think that in the United States hindsight shows that many mistakes were made. Undoubtedly the Left should have been more patient in winning over the masses. Nor can we deny the Leftist reactions after the split and the Leftist programs which were developed which further isolated us from the masses and which made impossible any collaboration with those from whom we split away. These mistakes have to be recognized. But they can only be recognized after you recognize first of all that the split on a world scale arose on the basis of material conditions that had been developing—the rise of imperialism, the struggles that preceded the war, the first world war itself,

the October Revolution, the new policies needed for the new situation,—policies resisted by the reformists. Of course it is true that the policy that was pursued at that time by the Communists on a world scale was based on a post-war perspective which included the probable development of a revolution at least in Europe, immediately following the Russian Revolution. And had there been a revolution in Europe at that time obviously its effect would have been enormous on the rest of the world. And then, of course, many questions which we examine now would have had a different aspect.

#### THE POST-WAR ERA

From 1921, however, Lenin already raised the cry against sectarianism and also laid central emphasis on the united front tactic. In the subsequent period it was clear that the Communists were trying to rectify the situation, to meet the problem created by the breach in the working class, particularly since the revolution outside of Russia was subsiding. The united front tactic didn't arise just out of nowhere. However, that tactic too, particularly after the death of Lenin, was not fully developed, was not developed boldly or consistently, was not broadly pursued, was dealt with in a sectarian manner, on a world scale. We do not have any doubt as to the character of the mistake that was made in classifying Social Democracy as social fascism; this hindered the

struggle against fascism. Certainly after it became clear that partial stabilization had set in and the revolution was not developing further, there was an underestimation of the reformist influence among the masses. In saying this, some may feel we are trying to absolve the role of the Social Democratic leaders. But that's not the point we are dealing with here. We're dealing with *our* policy, with *our* mistakes, treating *them* as an objective fact, although in some respects our mistakes played a role also in determining to what extent the Social Democrats were able to hold on to the masses and hence also limiting the pressure of the masses upon them, which would have resulted in a different policy.

#### WHAT IS REALLY NEW?

Now as to the third tendency: those who recognize something new in our approach to Social Democracy, but see only a new tactical approach, and fail to see something radically new. Relevant is a portion from the Khrushchev report to the XXth Congress:

Life has put on the agenda many questions which not only demand rapprochement and cooperation between all workers' parties but also create real possibilities for this cooperation. The most important of these questions is that of preventing a new war. If the working class comes out as a united organized force and acts with firm resolution, there will be no war.

All this places an historic responsi-

bility upon all leaders of the labor movement. The interests of the struggle for peace make it imperative to find points of contact and on these grounds to lay the foundations for cooperation, sweeping aside mutual recriminations. Here cooperation with those circles of the socialist movement whose views on the forms of transition to Socialism differ from ours is also possible and essential. Among them are not a few people who are honestly mistaken on this question, but this is no obstacle to cooperation. Today many Social-Democrats stand for active struggle against the war danger and militarism, for rapprochement with the socialist countries, for unity of the labor movement. We sincerely greet these Social-Democrats and are willing to do everything necessary to join our efforts in the struggle for the noble cause of upholding peace and the interests of the working people.

And the following from the speech of Suslov:

No one will deny that the split in the international labor movement, at a time when the energies of the peoples should be united to combat the war danger, is doubly intolerable. The movement is faced with problems of overshadowing importance, and on these we can find common ground with the Social-Democrats. It should be possible, therefore, to establish working contact, closer relations and cooperation on these problems. Such a possibility stems, above all, from the fact that in the present situation, the paramount issues confronting the labor movement are defense of peace, national freedom and democracy.

Here we see not only a departure

from the old conception of standpatism on this question, or merely dealing with the question of greater skill in fighting Social Democracy. It is something new to speak of "rapprochement and cooperation" between all workers' parties. They are being called workers' parties, whose views on Socialism and politics differ from ours; notice that reference is made to Social Democrats who stand for active struggle against the war danger, militarism, etc.

*While we have to develop the most thorough and friendly discussion on all questions, including differences on ideological questions, between us and the Social Democrats, trying to find a basis of agreement where and with whom we can, and to continue and develop good relations with those, it is on the basis of issues confronting our people that we must try to develop unity, unity of action of all kinds. And in doing that, life itself will contribute much to the dissolving of many of the past differences which we cannot resolve simply by discussion. In other words, it is not that we say we have no ideological differences (although on some questions they have narrowed). The new is first of all that we see that the paramount thing is the fight for peace and the fight for democracy and the fight on other immediate questions which is a life-and death matter, on which we can find common ground. And also that even where we disagree, we disagree in a different way. We look upon them as workers' organiza-*

*tions as such, including the elected leaders, and not through the so-called united front from below. We deal with these organizations fraternally and not as enemies. We strive for their cooperation, not liquidation.*

#### THE SITUATION TODAY

Clearly, we have no mass Social-Democratic Party in the United States today. As a matter of fact, as we know, at one time there was a much greater Socialist movement in the United States, not only through our own party, but in the old Socialist Party. Its high point was probably around 1912. The reason for the decline of the Marxist movement, so that there is a dilution of socialist consciousness among the American working class taken as a whole, was due to many factors. Undoubtedly, the most important one was the objective factor, the new role of American imperialism following the end of the first World War, and its constantly increasing role on a world scale—something to which we have not always given full attention and which is at the bottom of many of our errors.

The second factor is a subjective one, first in the way the split took place and in the mistakes of our own party. This has been over many years; we do not refer to the present alone. For example, one of these is the 1932 elections. After we had led many important struggles against wage cuts and unemployment, for unemployment insurance, for Negro

rights, and so on, even then the Socialist Party's vote was about ten times ours in 1932. In other words, if we really want to trace the matter, we will find many mistakes that we made, of all kinds, not only in the last ten years, with regard to how to combine the fight for immediate issues with the fight for Socialism. And to a certain extent we are trying to deal with that question in our Draft Resolution. But be that as it may, as we know, at the present time, there is no mass Social-Democratic Party or Socialist Party, although we have to give much more attention to the existing Socialist groups whose influence in the labor and people's movement cannot be measured solely by the numerical strength of these organizations or their current activities.

We have a trade-union movement which is different from other countries, in that the majority of its leaders support capitalism openly, although a number of some of the very important unions are people who have a Social-Democratic background, like Dubinsky, Reuther, Rieve, and others.

Obviously, therefore, the problem does not present itself to us in the same forms as in Britain, or in Germany, or in other countries where mass Social-Democratic Parties exist. In some cases, Communist Parties of a mass character exist side by side, in some cases the Communist Parties are much smaller, as in Western Germany and in the Scandinavian countries.

#### DIFFERING APPROACHES

Over the years we had a different approach to this problem. At one time we concluded that because there is no mass Socialist Party in the United States, therefore the problem is not a very important one for us, and in fact both in theory and in practice we were adhering to the idea of a "skipping over" stage—that the American workers would skip over the influence of reformism. When we spoke of organizing the unorganized, we spoke of the misleaders of labor as being bankrupt, that they would never do anything. The whole concept was that we would organize the unorganized under our own leadership, and the Trade Union Unity League was transformed from the Trade Union Educational League with that concept in mind. Of course, we said we would still work in the AFL, but we never had any feeling that the AFL would grow again, but rather that the growth would be from the new unions. When in fact some of the outstanding leaders of the AFL unions did form the CIO and launched a successful campaign to organize the unorganized, we did not analyze the significance fully and draw all conclusions from it. Perhaps the emphasis on Left-center unity tended to prevent us from freeing ourselves completely from the "skipping over" theory. This coincided with a certain estimate of American capitalism; because, after all, if we think that capitalism is

collapsing, then the illusion in capitalism will collapse, and reformism has no basis any more.

Or take the Labor Party question. Wasn't it our conception that we would organize the kind of Farmer-Labor Party that would skip over the reformist stage? Of course. If you study the period in the early twenties and study our Labor Party slogans, you will see how we split with everybody, including La Follette in 1924. Later on when we stopped using this as a slogan of action, we said that now the main thing is to organize the unorganized, and when we do, we will create the basis for a Labor Party. But the conception of the "skipping over" method of organizing the unorganized was carried over into the conception of organizing a Labor Party. What kind of a Party was it to be? It would not be Communist in the sense of having a complete Communist program, but neither would it be anti-Communist. And the whole conception was that we would skip over the reformist stage. Can we say that our support in launching the Progressive Party in 1948 was not also influenced by this skipping-over theory? Or our policy towards the Negro Liberation movement? Or the thinking of many on trade union unity?

We cannot free ourselves completely from sectarianism unless we understand that and have a different attitude to the reformists. Where and when we did recognize that there was something wrong with that

position, and that there is such a thing as Social-Democracy, some went to another extreme, labelling everybody Social-Democrat irrespective of any facts. So that Beck is a Social-Democrat, Reuther is a Social-Democrat, Lewis is a Social-Democrat, and so are Dubinsky, and Murray, and everybody else.

### THREE CURRENTS

To a certain extent, three currents have merged and operate jointly on the American scene in the labor movement and the people's movement. The three currents are the "legitimate" currents that grew out of the conditions in the country—*bourgeois reformism, labor reformism, and social reformism*. By bourgeois reformism we have in mind people like Lehman, Humphrey, etc. By the labor reformists we mean the majority of the trade-union leaders. By social-reformists we have in mind loosely those who have a socialist background or a socialist affiliation. *And the whole of them put together, operating through ADA, through COPE, and through many other organizations, are performing the function in this country under specific conditions which is performed by the organized Social-Democrats in others.*

The specific development of reformism in America dictates also a specific approach to this question. But the point to be specially noted is the inevitability of a certain stage which cannot be skipped over and of which we must not be afraid.

To speak programmatically, *at this particular moment*, most Socialist Parties today are not so far apart in their ideology from the reformists of the United States, despite their different origins in the past. Take, for example, Britain today. In Britain there are groupings in the Labor Party. But the dominant leadership of the British Labor Party, whose ideology was never really Marxist, has an outlook today that is based on the concept of a mixed economy—part private enterprise, part nationalized. This is well established and documented in a book by one of the leaders of the British Labor Party, Williams, whose theory runs like this: He wants to have the kind of Socialism which is democratic. Experience, he says, shows that it is impossible to have democracy with a one-party system. But we also know, he says, that parties are a reflection of classes and therefore if you want to have more than one party, you have to maintain more than one class. How can you do that? Well, you can only do it in one way, by maintaining part of the capitalist class side by side with Socialism, which to him is in reality nationalization of certain industries. In this way you will assure two classes, two parties, and democracy.

In West Germany, where to my knowledge there is no immediate program among the Social Democrats that calls for any kind of Socialism, when the American bourgeoisie views the elections of 1957 and the possibility that Adenauer

may be defeated by the Social-Democrats, the main fear is in the orientation of foreign policy. Nobody dreams that there is going to be Socialism, because their official policy today is one of co-responsibility. Workers should help to determine policy and wages in factories, etc. In the Scandinavian countries, where Social Democrats have been in office for a quarter of a century, the thing common to all of them is the "welfare state," a certain amount of nationalization, but certainly not Socialism. We know the French party is in office today, and that in Algeria they are trying to save imperialism, but nobody even accuses them of doing anything to introduce Socialism.

In fact, reformism in the United States has this much in common with reformism in these other countries: the welfare state, certain elements of state capitalism, and in some countries nationalization, something which has not yet arisen in this country in any serious form. But this also cannot be ruled out under certain conditions. Of course, this official policy is being challenged to one degree or another, as in Britain and in other countries. The ideal of Socialism remains among the millions and in the first place among the worker members of the Social-Democratic parties. Of course, the Nenni socialists have a different conception. There are other policies in other countries with which unfortunately we are not fully familiar; these require very careful study.

### ON OUR PARTY

We do not propose to go into the basic problem of the future of our Party, its program, its structure etc. except to say that our Party is now, and always will be, a Party based on scientific socialism, Marxism, Marxism-Leninism, as we interpret it. And not only that—Marxism not merely as we *apply* it to conditions in the United States, but as we *develop* it on the basis of the concrete conditions in the United States. This does not mean merely to pay lip service to the peculiarities and then forget about them because there may be some danger that they may lead to some *exceptional* conclusions. There was a tendency in our Party that while we paid lip service to the peculiarities, we seemed to get frightened by every difference. We have to approach this question a little differently now. Already on a world scale there are new concepts with regard to the inevitability of war, peaceful transition, etc. We ourselves are beginning to develop our own thinking with regard to economic questions, civil liberties, etc. Undoubtedly, as we go on trying to study and understand better our own situation, there will be mistakes, there will be dangers. But there is an equal, perhaps a greater danger, in not boldly and courageously facing up to the new situation and new tasks. Whatever we do at the Convention, we are certain to emerge as a Marxist organization. Our country, the people, the working class of

the United States need such a Marxist organization. And when there is developed in the United States a broader, united socialist organization, it will also be a Marxist organization. It is not a reformist, Social-Democratic organization that we have in mind when we speak of the eventual emergence of such a broader Marxist party.

There is some confusion because some comrades, and some people outside our Party, mix up the need for a labor-peoples coalition with the new united Marxist party. We will have to be careful on that, too, because a lack of clarity on this question can lead to a Leftist-sectarian position on a people's coalition and an opportunist position on the united Marxist party. It is clear that the struggle for both movements will develop simultaneously. They will generally support each other objectively in what they do or don't do. But they are distinct movements, with distinct objectives which we have to keep in mind and clarify for our own Party and for those with whom we want to collaborate.

Now the reformist movement in the United States and in the other countries will not stand still. It is possible there will be among them significant forces moving to the Left. It is to be expected that many forces will move in the direction of an anti-monopoly coalition program and nationalization. It is even conceivable that side by side with this movement there may grow socialist currents in the reformist movement. This is not

excluded, particularly when we bear in mind the new impact of Socialism on a world scale and that given a number of years of peace the socialist countries will really be able to show what they can accomplish, especially now with democratization taking place and with the new conditions and new possibilities developing. The experience of the rise of the Nenni Socialists in Italy cannot be looked upon as some freak development, something incapable of happening in other countries under certain conditions. Of course, let us bear in mind that this took place also with a very strong Communist Party which knew how to win over the masses. There is a big lesson for us in this.

Togliatti more and more deals with the possibility, in fact what he accepts almost as a certainty for Italy, that Italy will come to Socialism through a Socialist party side by side with the Communist Party and perhaps other democratic parties. It is not accidental that at the present time when there is talk of the merger between the two socialist parties in Italy, there is no talk of merging the Socialist Party with the Communist Party. This, of course, does not mean opposition to such a merger in principle. But it does show the probability of a number of workers' parties existing side by side and cooperating, and that the Communist Party, no matter under what name, is a Marxist party in every sense of the word.

Now the Chinese comrades, for example, are speaking more and more about the existence of differences within the Party, and declaring that it is with such different points of view that a line is to be hammered out. But that is not identical with differences in ideological systems. This diversity is possible only on the basis of adherence to a common basic ideology.

The kind of party we want to have in the future—a Marxist party—is the kind of party which we should try to bring into being now at our coming convention. It is wrong to say that if we are going to have a mass party we must be willing to abandon the principles of Marxism, but that while we have our own party, we should fight for Marxism. That would be ridiculous. It is possible to make certain concessions here and there to people who are not yet fully clear, especially if this may be necessary to achieve a broader Marxist Party. But what we strive for is a Marxist party based on a common ideology and on the recognition that reformism and Marxism are not identical in ideology. We have to be clear on that. A new approach, new possibilities towards immediate struggle as well as bringing many ultimately to closer collaboration or even to organic unity, does not mean that we abandon these differences or that we leave out the probability that here too there would develop, side by side, different parties of the working class as the American workers ad-

vance more and more towards Socialism.

#### ON THE AMERICAN WAY

With regard to new roads to Socialism, we know that we will have to find the American road and it is impossible to predict everything today. We already did project, however, the need and the possibility of developing the anti-monopoly coalition as the next strategic task and we see this as one of the important steps in the direction towards that goal which we Marxists have. This is not something which will develop the same in all countries. In Great Britain, for example, it is quite possible that the Labor Party may come to power under new conditions, that the British working class will be able to carry forward in the direction of establishing Socialism, not in the same way as was done in October 1917, but still accomplishing a radical transformation of society. Now there too it is possible that it may take the form first of a partial development towards a certain anti-monopoly program. But under any conditions, given the British Labor Party, its strength, its power, its influence, the experience of the British working class, it will not be identical with the perspective as we see it for ourselves today. So when we in our Resolution projected the anti-monopoly coalition as a strategic task, this was already a major contribution as to the American road to Socialism.

It is necessary to be clear that by projecting such an approach we do not conceive that somehow at a certain point there will be this qualitative change and we'll have Socialism. Socialism still represents, no matter how it will be achieved, a radical transformation of society, a leap. We know that it is the working class that will be the leading force in this transformation; it will not be handed to us by the imperialists, who will say, "Well, we had enough already and let somebody else take over." We know that the struggles of the people, of the working class will precede, create the conditions for the peaceful constitutional path to Socialism. And the peoples' struggle will support the legal, constitutional steps in that direction.

Some say that the example of Socialism in other lands changes our conception that the masses will not arrive spontaneously at the necessity of Socialism, that this gives a new aspect to the question of spontaneity. We do not deny the inspiration the socialist countries are already having in large parts of the world, and will have, too, for the most advanced capitalist countries—given a certain amount of time and peace where they can show what they can really achieve. This will have a tremendous impact and will help determine when the masses will feel they do not want to live any longer under the old conditions. This histor-

ical moment will not arise on the basis of the masses feeling they are impoverished. There will be a whole complex of economic and political factors, including the need for peace and democracy and the intensification of all the social tensions that are building up in the country, and the example of Socialism in other lands, etc. But Socialism will still come about because of objective necessity, and not because people will decide: "Capitalism is pretty good, but can't we try something else?" It wouldn't come like that. We do not abandon the concept that Socialism will come when the objective conditions show the masses they must move to the next historic stage of development because they can no longer live under the old conditions. But we must place a new interpretation on this on the basis of the new realities and the new situation. In all this the impact of the socialist world will be a tremendous factor.

The emancipation of the working class is still the job of the working class of each country. And socialist consciousness will not develop spontaneously. Socialism in other lands will help, make it easier, but to develop consciousness is the job of the Marxists of our country. That is among the chief reasons why the American working class will continue to build—and better than ever before—its Marxist party.

## Anna Louise Strong's "The Stalin Era"

By Nemmy Sparks

THE APPEARANCE of a new book by Anna Louise Strong\* is heartily to be welcomed. It is a tribute to her fortitude during years of ostracism on a shameful charge, shamefully false. And it is a tribute to her unshaken faith in the new world of Socialism.

Following her participation as a columnist on the *Seattle Union Record* in the Seattle general strike of 1919, Miss Strong went to Russia with the American Friends Service in 1921, and soon became, through her continued travels, lecture tours and books, one of the foremost popularizers and interpreters to Americans of the rising new world of Socialism in the USSR and later, People's China.

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It was in the midst of world war, military collapse and economic ruin—the ultimate fruit of tzarist and bourgeois reaction in Russia—that Lenin spoke his historic first words to the Soviet Congress on November 7, 1917: "*We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order.*"

But as a matter of fact, only the foundations of the Socialist order could be laid at that time. The actual

construction had to wait for the consolidation of the Soviet Government itself, for the victory in the civil war, and the defeat of the intervention, for an intermediate period of the New Economic Policy with its restricted capitalism, for the bitter discussions, first with the Trotskyites and then with the Bukharinites—and finally the beginning of the five-year plan.

It is the period beginning with the discussions on the possibility of building Socialism in one country until the death of Stalin in 1953, that Miss Strong designates as "the Stalin era."

Of course, this 128-page booklet is not in any sense intended as a definitive work of history. But it is based on vivid personal observation and experience. One of its best features is its revival for people today—and especially for the post-war generation—of the world-wide excitement over the tremendous upward thrust of the new Socialist system. This was the period when the slogans of "planning" and "industrialization" first rang out as a challenge to capi-

\* *The Stalin Era*, New Century Publishers, N. Y., cloth \$2.75; paper \$1.00.

talism—a challenge even more real today as the peoples of Asia contemplate the Soviet example in seeking their own path to economic development and independence.

It revives likewise the story of the Soviet struggle for collective security to prevent World War II, and the enormous role of the Soviet people in crushing Hitler.

But it could hardly be expected that anyone at this early date would be able to develop the story of the Soviet Union from the vantage point of the new era, characterized in the words of Khrushchev by “the emergence of Socialism into a world system.”

Thus the author hardly throws any further light on the historic problems centering around the development of democracy in the Soviet Union. As the writings of Lenin demonstrate, the Soviet revolution, carrying forward the aims set by the Russian working class in the Revolution of 1905, originally intended to establish the widest political democracy, limited only by the necessity of protection against the counter-revolutionists.

But nowhere had history shown any possibility of advanced political democracy on a basis of economic backwardness. The primary task before the Soviet Government was to overcome the economic backwardness. It was not a question, as some have put it, of “choosing between economic democracy and political democracy.” There can be no such

hard and fast separation of economic and political democracy, though they do not necessarily develop uniformly hand-in-hand.

Without overcoming the economic backwardness, the Russian Revolution had no future at all; and the country itself had no future except to fall prey to foreign exploitation and partition, or at the very best, to slowly build up a new native capitalism under sufferance of the great powers.

Necessarily, this task required the hardest and most painful struggle. Peasant backwardness does not give way gracefully to superior logic and ideals for the future. On the contrary, it clings to the past with endless tenacity. Though thousands of peasants had given their lives for the new Soviet system, it was on this *peasant backwardness* that the defeated interventionists were basing their future plans. One has only to look again at the novels of Sholokhov, or to read again such a vivid work as Libidinsky's *A Week*, published here in 1923, to see the ruthless violence of the peasant opposition to change.

By the end of the first five-year plan, the basis of Socialist industry had been laid and collective farming stabilized. The second five-year plan was well under way. Then came what Miss Strong calls “the great madness.”

I do not think anyone anywhere knows the full story of the excesses

that occurred in the USSR in 1936-38, or can yet assess properly the blame. . . . The anti-Soviet press finds easy solution; it claims that Socialism is by nature ‘totalitarian’ and ‘ruthless.’ Nobody who knows the initiative of Soviet people in recent years and their passion for what they call their ‘freedom’ accepts such a view.

I agree with the author's characterization of the Soviet people—a subject to which she devotes a special chapter.

The characteristic of the people who built the new industries and farms was boundless initiative. When Americans speak of Soviet people as ‘regimented,’ I always laugh. . . . Never in any land, until my visits to China have I met so many dynamic individuals as those who found expression in the USSR's five-year plans.

The idea that the defects of the Stalin era were due to the “dark,” “benighted” character of the Russian people, today or in the past does not stand examination.

The Russian people have a history of struggle for democracy equal to our own. The fact is that while the form and outcome of the struggle for democracy were different in the two countries, in each country nevertheless these struggles took place and established an enduring tradition. America, setting up the first modern republic, cleared away the vestiges of feudal survivals (outside of the South). The struggle for democracy succeeded repeatedly in

winning gains in the form of institutions, especially in the original establishment of the Republic, in winning the Bill of Rights, in the extension of the franchise, the overthrow of Negro slavery, the building of the trade-union movement, etc.

In Russia, on the other hand, owing to the past history of the country, its feudal system, economic backwardness, etc., the struggle for democracy took place through a succession of revolts and revolutionary struggles, as well as repeated national uprisings by the nations held subject to the tzars, over more than two centuries. Only in the middle of the 19th century did the people succeed in abolishing serfdom, and in the early 20th century winning such a weak form of parliament as the tzarist Duma with a limited franchise, but eventually bursting through in the 1905 Revolution, and finally in the 1917 Revolution, sweeping away *all* oppressor classes from the country.

In searching for explanations, the author goes no further than the growth of “the arbitrary power of the political police” centralized and developed by Stalin, and its actual or possible infiltration. Others have looked for defects in the mechanism of the Soviet system. Still others have advanced the idea that the Soviet Union should have borrowed instruments from the American democratic system.

But Soviet democracy cannot be the same as American democracy. The country is different; the social and economic system is different—and historically more advanced. The Soviet Union must continue to develop its own forms of democratization. But no system, constitution or scheme can be immunized against distortion or violation. The guarantee must be in the living people and living organizations that operate the system.

It seems to me that the balance-wheel of the Soviet system is to be found not in governmental institutions, but in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It is not incidental that the CPSU finds a place in the USSR Constitution. In the USSR, the Communist Party must be truly a vanguard of the working class and the people, connected by innumerable threads with the masses—the collective leader, social conscience and inspiration of Soviet society. This was the path in which Lenin led it.

When Stalin's distortions damaged the composition of the Party and its democratic functioning, treating dissent and ideological differences as treason, he distorted the balance of the Soviet system and removed the obstacle to his individual supremacy. His theory that the class struggle continued to sharpen even after the achievement of Socialism was used to justify the inordinate expansion of the security forces and contributed to the disastrous injustices and

crimes so alien to the spirit of Soviet Socialism.

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Miss Strong raises briefly the problem of the relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, in the light of the news headlines on Poland and Hungary:

Warsaw and Budapest replied that their friendship with the USSR was "unbreakable," that all they wanted was "sovereignty," "equality." What are these words? They have waited far too long—the time is late.

What "sovereignty" has any nation in today's world? What "equality" has a nation the size of Poland in a bilateral argument with the USSR's 200,000,000 people, holding one-sixth of the world? These terms must be defined. They have been defined again and again in history; but always they must be redefined in new conditions. Now they must be defined in a *Socialist* sense. Unless this is done and quickly, then all protestations of "friendship" are hollow. Friendships between nations change; allies drift apart.

I cannot agree with the author in this placing of the question. Nor can I agree when she says:

Khrushchev has not solved it; for the moment he has made it worse. His apologies to Tito, his attacks on Stalin have released all the separatist tendencies in Eastern Europe.

To my mind the basis for the answer is to be found in the national policy of Lenin. Before World War

I, the question of internationalism was considered such a simple and obvious matter in the Socialist movement that Lenin had great difficulty in convincing the Russian Socialists of the importance of the national question. He warned of national chauvinism and demanded a special policy and special consideration for the sensibilities of oppressed or formerly oppressed peoples, to win them as allies of the working class.

Still many people tended to think that national boundaries would just disappear or become unimportant under Socialism. But the Socialist revolution following the war was not world-wide; it was confined to one country. Everywhere the war had heightened nationalism, besides creating a number of new national states.

Today the tide of nationalism is higher than it has ever been in the modern world. Prior to, and during the Second World War, *both* sides of the class struggle fostered it. The imperialists, in striving for their own domination; the working class and peoples' forces, in the struggle against fascism and in the antifascist war in defense of the national existence and independence of their countries.

Since World War II nationalism has still been fostered; the imperialists still in their own drives for domination; on the other hand, the people's forces in England, France, Italy, etc., raising the slogan of national independence from domina-

tion by Wall Street imperialism.

But from another major sector the tide of nationalism has surged to immense importance. For nationalism and national independence are the slogans of the vast colonial revolution of the peoples of Asia and Africa.

Thus nationalism, far from losing importance since Lenin's day, has grown in importance, and can in no way be treated as Miss Strong seems here to imply, as something practically outdated.

It seems to me that the error of the later approach in this regard lay in *skipping stages*, refusing to recognize this situation. It lay in treating the People's Democracies as though the national independence of these countries were only *incidental* to their Socialist system, instead of recognizing that it must be the *necessary framework* of their Socialism.

I believe this is the essence of what the USSR officially recognized in its acknowledgment of error in its October 30th statement. And the promise of rectification lies in its assurance that its relations will be governed by Lenin's policy on this question.

This question underscores the statement in our own Communist Party's Draft Resolution:

The relations [between the C.P.U.S.A. and other Marxist parties] must be based on the principles of scientific Socialism, on proletarian in-

ternationalism. They must be based on each Communist Party serving the best national interests of its people and thereby the common interests of all progressive humanity. This requires the equality and independence of Marxist parties in the mutual discussion and resolution of common problems; the right and duty of the Communists of all countries to engage in comradely criticism of the policies and practices of the Communists of any country whenever they feel this necessary. This will strengthen, not weaken, international solidarity. It will advance the cause of Socialism in all countries.

I do not believe that Khrushchev "released separatist tendencies." Relaxation of control, flowing from a relaxation of tensions in the objective situation, is always a tremendously difficult business, full of risks. Witness how seriously Lenin dealt with the relaxation of tension at the end of the civil war and intervention in 1921, sounding the alarm against inaction, and bringing about a major change in the country's life to meet the situation—the New Economic Policy, which paved the way for a new leap forward.

But I agree with Miss Strong that "the forms of that union in diversity (of Socialist states) are still to be devised." Perhaps the point in the USSR October 30th statement about "a commonwealth of independent Socialist states" leads in that direction.

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To correct the faults of the USSR . . . can be done by an aroused people

and by reasonably intelligent and devoted officials. The constitutional forms exist; so do the wealth and the will.

I agree with this. Elsewhere Miss Strong shows that the objective soil in which the distortions could grow were the perennial threat of war and intervention and economic backwardness. Today the Soviet Union is no longer encircled. Geneva and the prospect of peaceful co-existence, resulting in large part from the persistent peace policy of the Soviet Union, is creating a new climate in the country.

As for the economic situation, today the Soviet Union is the second greatest industrial power of the world. The figures for annual Soviet production of pig-iron and steel are now 33 and 45 million tons respectively. The sixth five-year plan is to bring these figures to 53 and 68 million tons by 1960. An interesting prediction made by Maurice Hindus in 1945 in his book *The Cosacks* ties in with these figures:

The question arises when will civil liberties . . . become living facts [in the U.S.S.R.]? In my judgment . . . barring a war, or a tense international situation, the real test will come when the annual outputs [of pig-iron and steel] approximate figures of 50 or 60 million tons. With such an output of these metals the Soviets will have the secure and stable foundation for the two conditions which have been in the forefront of their thinking and planning . . . namely, national defense and an adequate standard of living.

Of course, life did not turn out quite as simple as Mr. Hindus's statistics. "A tense international situation" did indeed arise and became chronic—the cold war. The Soviet system had to strain itself not only for defense but also to help develop the industry of China and the People's Democracies under conditions of the strategic trade boycott by the capitalist world. Nevertheless, the figures now in sight do represent a new qualitative stage—a stage in which, as Bulganin pointed out, the country is becoming ready to enter the new industrial era of atomic energy and automation.

But in building industry the Soviet Union has likewise been building the forces to oppose the bureaucratic distortions: the men and women who man the industries—the new working class. In 1917 the Russian working class numbered a mere two-and-a-half million in a population of 130 million. Today the working class has risen to some 40 million out of a population of 200 million.

With the working class coming of age, many former peasants trained in the cities as skilled workers and technicians have been returning to the rural areas. This interchange is helping to shake up the situation in the collective farm areas and in the local Soviets and Party bodies. The idea that the changes registered and promised at the XXth Congress were initiated only by the top leadership does not hold water. On the

contrary, such changes can come about only as a result of struggle. The struggle in the lower levels of the Party against local bureaucracy and rigidity; in the factories and farms against mismanagement and callousness; in the country as a whole against excessive differentials in standards of living; in the ideological and literary fields against dogmatism and sterility—it is these, in my opinion, that were reflected and encouraged in the line presented by the leadership and adopted by the delegates at the XXth Congress.

The new qualitative change registered in production on the economic front, together with the consequent social developments, the resurgence of activity among the working class, provide, in my opinion, the chief causes of the moves towards democratization, as well as the indication that despite all possible ups and downs, they will prove irreversible.

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On one other point I must take issue with Miss Strong. She has a right, of course, to draw her own balance, but to me, her general picture of Stalin still suffers too much from Stalin's own popularization of his role, from the actual cult of the individual. While she is correct that he was "the engineer of the world's first Socialist state," she tends to underplay and exculpate him to a certain degree from the crimes, distortions and stultification that he fostered, the damage to the cause of

Socialism in the USSR and everywhere. Nor can he, in my opinion, rest in the same category as Lenin. The gigantic influence of Lenin as the inspirer of the Soviet people, and the initiator of the Age of Socialism, is itself shown by the fact that Stalin always preferred to be called "the best disciple of Lenin." But Stalin's methods of leadership were not the way of Lenin.

The history of the development of the Soviet Union since that day in November 39 years ago, when Lenin spoke with such confidence to the Soviet Congress, remains, despite the distortions, the great epic of the 20th century. It has marked for the whole world the beginning of the transi-

tion from capitalism to Socialism. It has shown that Socialism works and has the capacity to grow and to correct errors.

At the cost of enormous sacrifices, its people time and again accomplished the incredible. We cannot forget they bore the brunt of Hitler's attack and came through to crush fascism. They were the first of the new Socialist world system and made an easier path for all the others to follow.

The concise re-telling of this story by Miss Strong in her characteristically compelling style is a welcome contribution to the present discussion of the problems of the new era.

## What Kind of a Change?\*

By Eugene Dennis

THE CPUSA IS AT a critical turning point in its history. Emerging from the repressive blows of the cold war decade and profoundly shaken by the Stalin revelations and the tragic events in Hungary, our Party is in the throes of a grave crisis.

It is now striving to surmount its difficulties and move forward. It is seeking to overcome its relative isolation, rectify its past errors and draw the necessary conclusions from the far-reaching changes that have taken place in the world.

It is in this situation that many proposals and ideas are being put forward to enable our Party to resolve the problems that beset it and to enhance our contributions to our nation and its working people. In the search for correct answers, sharp differences and divisions have arisen in our ranks, including the divergent

views that developed and exist between Comrade Foster and myself and others concerning the April meeting of the National Committee and our approach to the main political line of the Draft Resolution.

In my opinion the struggle against Left-sectarianism and dogmatism—now and on the morrow—still remains the number one internal problem confronting our Party *nationally*. And this is so despite the fact that, as the Draft Resolution indicates, the danger of Right-opportunism is bound to grow in the present and coming period.

Recognizing that the political-ideological struggle against Left-sectarianism—which is so deeply ingrained in our organization—has only begun and will be a protracted one, it is also necessary to note that currently one of the most controversial issues of all—one that presently threatens the unity and future of our organization—is that now taking place in our ranks around the question of party versus association.

By now it must be clear to all that the differences among some of

\* This article was written early in December, shortly after several National Committee members proposed transforming our Party into a non-Party organization, and after the New York State Committee adopted a series of motions recommending a change in the name and form of the Communist Party at its forthcoming national convention. Later, in its sessions of December 17-19, the National Committee adopted an amendment to the Draft Resolution reaffirming its opposition to any such changes at this convention, though a majority urged that these and related matters be examined further by the incoming National Committee—author's note.

us over proposed changes in the name and form of our Communist Party have deep roots. Beneath the surface lie profound differences over the future and basic character of our organization, and these, in turn, arise out of different estimates of the State of the Union, the world we live in, and the shape of things to come.

#### WHAT WE WANT

Most of the membership and leadership agree that big changes must be made in our Party, in its policies and practices—indeed they are long overdue. Most of those favoring these changes seek to learn from past mistakes and new developments, in order to build a more effective working class Marxist organization, with closer ties to the labor movement, the Negro people, and all progressive forces in America.

They see the urgent need for a drastic break with dogmatism and sectarianism. They consider it imperative to alter radically our methods of work, and assure genuine party democracy that will enlist the creative initiative of all our members—especially of those who participate in the big mass movements and organizations of the working people. They favor bold steps to refresh and strengthen the leadership at all levels. They believe, too, this requires that we modify or develop certain theoretical propositions in accord with changed conditions in interna-

tional, and national relationships.

This is the kind of change I advocate.

To effect such vital changes it seems to me that the primary questions involve guaranteeing a sound Marxist-Leninist program and policy; mapping out correct tactics and displaying greater political and organizing initiative in the popular mass movements for economic and social betterment, for Negro rights and civil liberties, for peace and social progress; achieving a stronger working class base and influence and broader united front relations; in streamlining the way we work and function, ensuring a new dimension to inner party democracy, including not only the right to dissent while abiding by the majority will—but, above all, assuring that our party membership is enabled to play a more decisive and consistent role in the formulation as well as the execution of policy.

#### NAME AND FORM

I believe questions involving a change of name and form of organization are, at best, subordinate and secondary. While these are legitimate matters of discussion and warrant consideration on their merits, and while the latter are not necessarily questions of principle—nonetheless they do involve matters of principle.

Further, it is my view that prop-

ositions to change the name and form of organization of our party cannot be considered as things in themselves. They should be weighed in the context of the political situation and outlook. And this, of necessity, must also include a proper appreciation of the subjective factors, including the status and the trends and moods within our party.

While I have opposed the idea of transforming our CP into a political action association—and do now more strongly than ever—up until recently I for one have had an open mind as to whether a change of name might be desirable at the coming convention. However, for the past several months I have definitely concluded that to carry through a change of name now might have extremely negative effects.

At this moment when some in our ranks—including a number of leaders—contend that our Party is finished, bankrupt and hopelessly compromised, and when our Party is sorely divided on the nature of some of the changes our Party should make—even a change in name could have harmful consequences.

I wish to avoid and help prevent this.

I recognize, of course, that many comrades believe otherwise. Some of them, especially in New York, are waging an all-out crusade not only for a change in name, but also for a political action type of organization.

They believe that such changes are advisable and might bring certain advantages to the Party. Because of this, because of the cardinal issues involved, and because this question may probably play a special role at our convention, I wish to deal with some of the reasons which certain proponents of a political association advance in behalf of their proposals.

At the outset, it should be understood that earnest arguments are being advanced in behalf of transforming the Party into a political-action type of organization. These must be evaluated on their merits. In this connection it should be recognized that among those who advocate that we change the name and form of the Communist Party there are diverse schools of thought and different motivations.

Some say we should continue as a Marxist-Leninist organization, but not as a political party. They argue that a host of restrictive laws have already robbed us of our electoral status, and that in surrendering our claim to that status we would simply be facing up to a fact of life.

#### WRONG ADDRESS

I think these comrades address their demand for change to the wrong quarters: what needs to be changed are the undemocratic and un-American laws that now circumscribe our Party's civil liberty and electoral activity. Such laws cannot

be permitted to remain a "fact of life" in America, if we and other progressive and working class parties are to help keep open the democratic and constitutional processes of social advance and change. On the contrary. The defense and extension of the important, although limited, rights now grudgingly conceded to us as a minority party are vital not only to us Communists, but to all Americans who seek to restore the Bill of Rights and strive for a "New America."

Some of these comrades also argue that since our Party envisages and strives for a broad anti-monopoly coalition, and a new progressive political alignment based on such a coalition—expressing itself through a mass labor-farmer party or some other form of political re-alignment—and since this is a realistic perspective—that our participation in such an anti-trust coalition would be facilitated if we were not a political party.

But I think these comrades are in too much of a hurry to cross the bridge we won't get to for awhile. A nationwide anti-monopoly coalition and mass party, under labor's leadership, has yet to be built; what it will look like and how it will view our Party remains to be seen. Our participation in a new democratic coalition and political realignment of the future will be determined by the extent of our contribution to its development and growth, especially by what we do to help shape and un-

fold anti-monopoly mass movements,—rather than by the name or form of our organization.

Nevertheless, and since this is likely to be a process, some argue that we should therefore cease to be a political party now, so that meanwhile our members may more freely participate in the affairs of one or the other of the existing major parties. But how can we make our major contribution to the support of individual progressive or labor candidates whose program merits such support? Is it not through the trade unions and their political instruments, and through other popular organizations—rather than through the machines of the Republican or Democratic parties?

What would happen if our membership were diffused in one or the other of the two parties of Big Business? I think two things would happen: many individuals would lose their bearings and become more influenced than influential, and our Communist organization as such would be rendered impotent and reduced to conducting abstract propaganda for socialism.

Some comrades hope that the problem of regaining our constitutional rights and achieving full legality might be facilitated by changing the Communist Party into some kind of political action association. Obviously, in certain circumstances, it may be necessary to take some steps dictated by legal requirements. Yet today it should be borne in mind

that the architects of the McCarran Act and the Communist Control Act proscribed not the Communist Party, but Communist "action" and Communist "front" organizations. They "outlawed" any organization, including any trade union, that engages in militant working class struggle. Let those who doubt this look at the new attacks against the Mine, Mill & Smelter and the UE leaderships, and let them heed the current "states rights" drive to outlaw the NAACP in the South.

#### STRUGGLE IS REQUIRED

Must we therefore submit to and learn to live with our present status of twilight legality? By no means! The experience of the last difficult five years has demonstrated how deep is the American people's attachment to the Bill of Rights. For all our Party's shortcomings and mistakes, our staunchness under attack has helped growing numbers to understand that civil liberty is in fact indivisible, and that the democratic rights of labor, the Negro people and of all Americans are inextricably bound up with those of the American Communists.

The hard lessons of the days of rampant McCarthyism and the more favorable political climate of today create new opportunities for further spreading that understanding. New opportunities impose new obligations. Now, more than ever, our duty to our fellow Americans

requires that we play an even more effective role in the struggle for civil liberty and civil rights, for an end to anti-labor laws—while more resolutely and boldly rallying other forces for the repeal of all repressive legislation, amnesty for political prisoners, and an end to discrimination against Communists in labor and other mass organizations.

Those who think otherwise must have come to the mistaken conclusion that monopoly reaction is no longer a serious threat to democracy in America. Likewise they close their eyes to the fact that during the past year or so more and more liberal and labor spokesmen are speaking out in defense of the Bill of Rights for Communists and non-Communists alike, and in this process willingly meet and speak and cooperate with members and representatives of the CPUSA.

There are some advocates of a change to a political association, or an equally nebulous "League for Socialist Unity," who see this as a transitional move toward a new united party of socialism.

#### ON A MERGER

No one can say with certainty at this moment just when or how a broad mass working class party of socialism, based on Marxism, will come upon the American scene. It may develop primarily through and around our Party. It may come about through a merger of our party

with other Marxist groups—some already in existence, *although most probably with those yet to be organized from and within the ranks of organized labor*—all of which need to be encouraged and stimulated.

Certainly at the present time there is no realistic prospect or basis for a merger of the Communist Party with any of the existing groups which profess to be Marxist. Virtually all of these groups are narrowly sectarian, have the most tenuous ties with the working class, and do not have a basic Marxist program.

To date there has not emerged in any of them a sizeable or consistent Marxist grouping—although such a development probably shall yet occur. Hence any proposal for a new united party of socialism *at present* is realizable only on the basis of splinter groupings and of a mixture of Marxist and non-Marxist policies and program—all of which is contrary to what was projected at the April meeting of the National Committee.

In order to help advance the trend to a mass party of socialism, which should be resolutely fostered, the need of the hour is not wishful thinking about the eventual possibility of a merger of Marxist and pro-Marxist groupings. What is urgently required is a renewed effort to engage in fraternal discussion with all socialist-minded groups and people not only around basic issues of program, but also and above all in order to promote their united or

parallel struggle for labor and social welfare legislation, for civil liberties and civil rights, for peaceful co-existence and banning the H bomb, and for independent labor-farmer political action. In the process of developing unity of action for specific and urgent mass issues and demands, and in the course of fraternal exchanges around programmatic ideas—a sound basis can be laid for encouraging and cultivating the growth of diverse Marxist and Socialist groupings, as well as their eventual merger. This should be energetically developed everywhere. Simultaneously, and pursuant to this end, it is essential at all costs to consolidate and build the CPUSA as a strong Marxist-Leninist political party of the working class.

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Together with those who are legitimately concerned about the electoral and legal status of our Party, there are some who make no bones about the fact that they want to change not only the form and name of our organization, but its basic character as well. While enumerating or latching onto the reasons discussed above, they add other arguments that strike directly at matters of fundamental principle.

Thus there are some proponents of a political action association who consider that one of the prerequisites for building an effective mass Marxist organization in our country is to scrap the principles of a vanguard party. For the latter are considered

to be either “foreign importations,” outmoded, or otherwise unsuited to the needs of the American working class and its socialist vanguard.

It is true, as the Draft Resolution correctly notes, that over the past decades we American Communists made not a few costly mistakes in the dogmatic and sectarian way *we* interpreted and applied Marxist-Leninist principles. And the severe abuses arising from the misapplication of these principles have tended to place some of these principles into question and to render suspect some of the terms used to designate them. But we should not let our errors or distortions of any principle lead us to throw out the baby-with-the-water, to discard the *essence* of that which is valid and which needs to be interpreted and applied in accord with American conditions and working class interests.

#### FOR A VANGUARD

For instance, I for one do not believe that anything that has happened in these United States—including the historic upsurge of the Negro freedom movement and the progressive role of the NAACP, or the great promise of the merger of the AFL-CIO and the progressive role of certain unions—in any way obviates the need for a vanguard Marxist party of the American working class. Quite the contrary; though obviously the changes that have taken place in the labor and people’s movement over the past dec-

ade or so definitely affects the *way* in which the adherents of Marxism-Leninism should develop and perform their vanguard role.

Now more than ever a Marxist vanguard is needed not only to help raise the class consciousness of millions of trade unionists, but also to help imbue wide sections of the working class with socialist consciousness. This is required not only to enable the working class to promote its fundamental interests and fulfill its historical destiny, but also to advance the immediate interests of labor and its popular allies.

Whether it is in the struggle for desegregation and abolishing Senate rule 22, for a 30-hour week without reduction in pay, for independent political action, for building a labor-farmer-Negro alliance, etc.—it is necessary that we American Communists, individually and collectively, display greater political and organizing initiative in helping implement and advance all decisions and programs of action of the unions and other mass organizations that are in the people’s interest. It is necessary to expand and raise to new levels our contributions on the ideological front in the battle for ideas—and as a party to independently bring forward our own political position and views.

In this connection it is appropriate to heed the perceptive observations of the foremost Marxist of the 20th century—words which are still valid today and for us:

The task of the party is not to invent some fashionable method of helping the workers, but to join the workers' movement, to bring light to that movement, and assist the workers in the struggle which they have already started themselves.

The biggest struggles now under way in the United States are those for Negro rights and freedom and especially for full equality and democracy in the South; union and job security, higher living standards, and organizing the unorganized; adequate housing, education, social welfare; civil liberties and the enforcement of the Bill of Rights; outlawing H-bomb tests and atomic warfare, and ensuring peaceful negotiations between the East and West.

The real issue is not whether there is a need for a Marxist vanguard but precisely *how* we American Communists exercise our vanguard role in the new conditions of today. The answer to this can only be provided by the collective experience and judgment of the entire Party.

While some comrades question this—it is obvious that the economic royalists are not so indifferent as to what is involved. The continued existence and operation of the McCarran Act, the Taft-Hartley Act, the Communist Control Act and the Smith Act are proof-plus.

As for the question of democratic centralism—a concept and term which has been grossly abused and

misused in word and deed—this too is a cardinal working class principle of organization that should not be scuttled, though it definitely needs to be understood, used and developed in a new way. For it is an indispensable source of working class strength, particularly in a country like ours which has the biggest, most ruthless giant monopolies.

#### NUB OF THE QUESTION

Contrary to certain views, bureaucracy is not synonymous with nor inherent in democratic centralism. The nub of the question is how this principle is applied—one-sidedly and mechanically, or with full consideration for the twin aspects of its features, i.e., the combination of the greatest inner party democracy, including the right to dissent, with the policy and practice of subordinating the minority view to that of the majority will and of various party subdivisions to the highest bodies, including to the collective will of the national convention.

Moreover, the main features of democratic centralism are just as American as they are British or Russian, Chinese or Italian. As everyone knows, most American trade unions and even the U.S. Congress operate on a version of democratic centralism, even if these bodies happen to place their chief emphasis on "centralism."

In any event, it seems to me that the main changes embodied in our Draft Constitution which provide

guarantees for a vast expansion of inner party democracy within the framework of the concept of democratic centralism point the way to a new and sound application of that which is universally valid in this Marxist organizational principle, as well as of that which is extremely pertinent and applicable to our own American conditions.

As for the underlying concept of monolithic unity—a very cumbersome and misconstrued term—which some of the advocates of a change in name and form likewise wish to bury, suffice it to say that no genuine Marxist organization, party or association, could long exist if it discarded the substance of this basic precept which means having a common theory and political program, plus singleness of purpose and action. For what is involved here is not "freedom of discussion" versus "iron discipline" as some distortedly claim today. What is at stake is whether we Communists, while ensuring the right to debate and dissent, shall adhere to the science of Marxism-Leninism, and whether we shall be a united and a cohesive organization which can act collectively and with dispatch. To the extent that such terms as democratic centralism and monolithic unity may convey objectionable or confused meanings—these should be replaced by terms which accurately define precisely what we American Communists mean and want.

There are some advocates of an association who think the Communist Party is discredited and hopelessly compromised, and that there is nothing left for us to do but make way for and be superseded by some other "Marxist" alignment. Those who have left our ranks in the recent period put it as frankly and bluntly as that. Among those who have these same opinions and remain in the Party, some say we should re-organize the Party into a loose association, league, or some other transitional type of organization, in order to rise again sometimes, like some Phoenix, from the ashes.

#### THE PAST DECADE

Since no one can altogether ignore the Communist Party's proud achievements in the struggle against Hitler, Tojo, and Franco; for organizing the unorganized; for unemployment and social insurance; in defense of Tom Mooney and Sacco-Vanzetti; in championing the lives of the Scottsboro Boys and the rights of all the Negro people—it is said that the irreparable damage to our good name was done in the last decade.

No one who has read my report to last April's meeting of the National Committee can charge me with attempting to gloss over our grievous mistakes of those ten years, including those in which I share re-

sponsibility. Mistakes are one thing; bankruptcy and hopeless compromise are quite another thing.

We made many mistakes in our trade-union policy; but our worst enemy cannot say we ever failed to take the side of labor against the big corporations.

We made mistakes in regard to how best to advance the Negro people's liberation movement; but we always waged a resolute struggle against Eastlandism and its northern counterparts.

We made the mistake, at times, of overestimating the precise phase of the fascist danger in our country. We may have sometimes been sectarian in our struggle to defend the Bill of Rights. But we never exhibited cowardice in the fight against McCarthyism.

We sometimes made the mistake of overestimating the imminence of world war. But, in time, our vanguard opposition to the Korean War and the war in Viet Nam proved not so very far in advance of the peace-loving American people. And our endeavors to promote American-Soviet friendship and peaceful co-existence of the East and West found wide response among the American people at Geneva and is affirmed again by the current and extending grass roots demand for a new summit meeting.

It is true that in the last decade we did not always fight *correctly* against the main enemy—monopoly. But if we ever tended to compromise

ourselves by forgetting the real enemy, that happened in the period of the Communist Political Association in 1944; and *not* after the reconstitution of the Communist Party in 1945.

What really prompts those who make the charge that our Communist Party is discredited beyond repair? Is it not their notion that Marxism-Leninism is "discredited" or "obsolete"?

The myth that there are any infallible individuals anywhere in the world has been exploded. The best Marxists, being human, are not immune to error. But this incontrovertible fact does not now entitle non-Marxists, or self-styled "creative" Marxists to assume the mantle of infallibility.

Over the past decades we American Marxists sometimes made the mistake of regarding the social science of Marxism-Leninism as rigid dogma. We were wrong. But the fault lay in us, not in Marxism-Leninism. We will not be better off if we substitute new dogma for old, and fail to correctly interpret and develop and help enrich our advanced working-class science. And the worst mistake of all would be to throw away the compass merely because we misused it, and drift at the mercy of wind and tide.

Of course those who charge that our Communist Party is hopelessly compromised not only consider that Marxism-Leninism is discredited, but also that the socialist countries,

whose liberation from capitalist exploitation it guided, are equally compromised.

No one can deny that the leaders of the socialist countries are confronted with difficult, unprecedented and complex problems—some of them arising from the harmful effects of past mistakes and certain gross violations of socialist principles. but those who brush off their on-the-spot analysis of these problems, seek to prove a shocking contrast between "appearance and reality," and minimize their pioneering effort to correct mistakes, effect changes and cope with the new problems arising from the emergence of socialism as a world system—obviously lack confidence in the working-class nature and the self-correcting potentiality of the socialist system itself.

I will deal with the implications of their position in another connection. Here it is sufficient to say that no violation of socialist principles committed by others and no errors of which others bear responsibility, can compromise *us*. Only we American Communists can compromise our Communist Party. We cannot ride piggyback on the Marxists of other countries, nor be carried by them either to glory or perdition.

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Among some of the proponents of an amorphous political association there is a kindred and allied school of thought. Some of these comrades argue that the profound change

which has taken place in the world requires that the Communist Party of the United States transform itself into a new type of organization ideologically independent of world Marxist thought.

#### WORLD CHANGES

It is obvious that very big changes have taken place in the world and that elements of significant change appear in our country. It is obvious that we can only solve our political and organizational problems on the basis of a common understanding of these changes, of the times in which we live, and the direction in which events are moving.

It is generally recognized, for instance, that the main features of the new situation include the emergence of a system of socialist states, the already far advanced and constantly spreading movement for national liberation in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and the existence of a group of neutral states opposing alignment with any bloc committed to the maintenance of world peace.

These historic developments have in no way altered the basic aims of the imperialists in our own or any other country. Of them it can be said that the more their tactics change, the more their strategic aims remain the same.

The imperialist leopard has not changed its spots. The contradictions inherent in monopoly capitalism constantly drive it to aggressive

and predatory acts and adventurist moves. It repeatedly draws back from the very edge of the precipice only because it must reckon with the enormous strength of the socialist, anti-imperialist and other peace forces that confront it, and because the monopolists realize that world capitalism could not survive an atomic world conflict.

It is for this reason that world war is no longer fatalistically inevitable.

Even the desperate acts of aggression against Egypt on the part of Anglo-French imperialism and its accomplice, Israel, which threatened world peace, illustrates this. Due to the aforementioned and related factors, the instigators of imperialist war and colonial enslavement have been forced to retreat, have suffered a severe setback, and defeat. Not even the concealed imperialist interference of Wall Street via its backing of a "Users' Canal" can basically alter this situation.

#### THE SOCIALIST CAMP

The prospects for world peace rest to no small extent upon the unity and strength of the socialist and the other anti-imperialist and peace forces of the world. Any loss of strength and any weakening of the unity of the socialist camp and this zone of peace endangers the prospects for peaceful co-existence.

That is why those who exaggerate the real problems now faced by the socialist countries, cast doubt on

their willingness or ability to overcome these difficulties, or blow up out of all proportions differences between the socialist lands and their Marxist parties—do a poor service to the cause of world peace and social advance.

There can be no doubt, for instance, that the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union and Hungary bear heavy responsibilities for the costly mistakes that led to the recent events in Hungary. But some Communists emphasize only this aspect and ignore the new factors in this complex situation. Yet what Marxist can deny that wherever counter-revolution raises its ugly head it must be crushed; and that wherever peace is threatened it must be preserved?

We American Communists have the right and the duty to express in a comradely way our independent judgment, opinions, and criticism concerning the policies adopted by Marxists of other countries. We are obligated to do this in a constructive way and within the framework of promoting the national interests of the American people and fraternal working class solidarity. But surely we have no reason to doubt the devotion and contributions of the countries of socialism to the cause of world peace and national freedom and social progress.

Moreover, as American workers and as Communists, our prime duty is to expose and combat the aims of American imperialism—the main

enemy of America's national interest and the peace of the world.

I turn now to some differences of opinion regarding the situation within our own country and the direction in which things are moving here and conclusions being drawn from this in the debate over party versus association.

#### GATES' CHANGES

The nub of these differences is exemplified in one paragraph which I quote in full from John Gates' article, "Time For A Change": (*Political Affairs*, November 1956).

We are living in a time of great change. The labor movement has grown to 15 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.

With the first three sentences in that paragraph I have no quarrel. But I do think even the average, non-Marxist worker would be puz-

zled by the rest. The demand for a four day week without reduction in pay is no "fringe" demand. It is considerably more advanced than a demand for a substantial wage increase. For this demand is a direct encroachment on the surplus value produced by the workers and appropriated by the vested corporate interests.

Yet, according to Gates, the only thing holding back the realization of this demand is the "relatively full employment in most industries." In other words, the employers would grant this demand now (presumably without any serious struggle on the part of the trade unions)—if it were not that their present rate of profit is so *high*. All that is needed is a slight recession, with the inevitable "reduction in working hours" (otherwise known as layoffs) and, out of their somewhat reduced profits, the big employers would cut the work week without cutting the paycheck!

If things in our country have indeed changed to this extent, it will be news to the American workers. I doubt very much, however, that they would consider a party that tried to sell them such a bill of goods as working class, or, to quote Gates, "solidly based on American reality" or one to be "recognized and accepted by American workers as their own."

#### NO CRISIS?

According to Gates, American workers do not believe a new eco-

conomic crisis 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." The emphasis is mine; and I think it important to note that Gates apparently thinks that capitalism itself has changed so radically that its fundamental contradictions have been or may be resolved, and that therefore cyclical crises are no longer inevitable.

This is a strange lesson to draw from our past mistakes when we often erred in predicting the *imminent onslaught* of a new economic crisis. Any working class party or political association basing itself on such an outlook would lose all claim to be considered Marxist, and if its leadership were followed could only disarm the workers and render them "helpless victims" before, as well as when, the economic cyclone strikes, as strike it must.

The American road to Socialism as described by Gates is truly unique. It is strewn with roses and follows a straight line from victory to victory. For Gates writes that here socialism "will come through the constantly successful struggle for peace, prosperity and democracy." And, in another connection, that "the struggle in our country will be of an evolutionary character and lead to an eventual revolutionary transformation."

This concept, I believe, has nothing in common with the established

position of our Party which projects, advocates, and strives for a peaceful and constitutional road to socialism. For the democratic road to socialism we envision is nonetheless a road of struggle—a struggle to curb and eventually break the power of monopoly capital. It is a struggle which will have to be led by the militant, class conscious, and united action of the working class in alliance with the Negro people, the exploited farmers, and other democratic sectors of our people.

It also appears from Gates' dream of the future that the revolutionary transformation of property relations, of capitalist society into socialist society, will not come about because the bourgeoisie is no longer able to rule in the old way, or because the working people are no longer willing to live under existing conditions, and must organize and struggle to realize their socialist aspirations.

On the contrary. According to Gates, conditions under capitalism will get better and better and then some fine day the American workers spontaneously will decide they want all this, and socialism too.

With such a perspective there is no wonder that some comrades reject the need for a vanguard party, for a Communist Party. And the fact of the matter is, if one were to accept their premise and outlook, there is even no need for a so-called Marxist political association; and a broad, mass working class party of socialism, based on the

principles of Marxism, would seem even more superfluous.

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What kind of a Marxist organization does the American working class really need? How should we strengthen and develop our Communist Party?

#### WANT BIG CHANGES

I am convinced that most of the membership and leadership want big changes. But they want these within the framework of building an independent, fighting, working class Marxist-Leninist organization—substantially in accord with the main political direction outlined in the Draft Resolution.

I believe we must radically democratize our Communist Party. We must establish political and organizational guarantees to ensure the enforcement of the collective will of the membership; to secure the pros and cons of divergent views and the periodic review of policy decisions; to curtail arbitrary powers of leading committees and to assure the strict adherence to all constitutional requirements.

I believe we must draw profound conclusions and effect many changes in our policy, structure, methods of work, and leadership. Above all, we must combat and uproot the deep-seated sectarian practices and dogmatic views which have plagued our Party over the decades. But whatever the future course of events may

dictate, I do not think we should change our form of organization now, or every time the wind shifts. Nor do I agree we should tamper with the scientific foundations of our Marxist ideology.

I think the American working class needs a truly scientific socialist vanguard which does not lose its bearings with every ebb and flow of the mass movement and political climate.

I think we need a party that can serve the American working class in time of relative prosperity and in time of economic recession or crisis. I think we need a party that knows how to lead the struggle against monopoly at all times. I think we need a party that militantly crusades for Negro rights, helps forge an unbreakable Negro-labor alliance and understands that the organization of the unorganized and the fight for the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments in the Deep South is the No. 1 democratic task of the nation. I think we need a party that knows how to combat American imperialism and its aggressive and predatory policies in periods of heightened international tension and in periods of relaxation which as now, with all their ups and downs and unevenness, offer new opportunities for establishing a stable peace.

#### DEMOCRATIC ROAD

I think America needs an advanced Marxist-Leninist working

class party to lead the struggle for a peaceful, democratic transition to socialism, and that after the advent of socialism in our country such a party will still be needed.

That kind of a party will not build castles in the air as an escape from the hard work of reaching, influencing and mobilizing wide sections of the working people—Negro and white, and laying the solid foundation for confidence in its program, policies and mass activity. It will not seek a substitute for effective mass work and Marxist ideas, nor shrink from telling the truth at moments when the truth happens to be unpopular.

That kind of a party will stand on its own feet and base itself on the realities of American life; above all, on the interests, needs and struggles

of the workers, the Negro people, the farmers and other exploited sectors of our people. It will also engage in comradely criticism of, as well as learn from the experiences of other Marxist parties, and help strengthen the bonds of solidarity between the workers of our country and those of all other lands.

I am confident that our membership, more closely tied to the working people of America than some seem to think, will register its collective judgment at our national convention for building a stronger and more effective American Marxist working class party—a united, cohesive, democratic and militant organization—that can better serve and advance the immediate and fundamental interests of America's working people.

## A Message to Party Organizations\*

By National Committee, CPUSA

Dear Comrades:

We are now a few weeks from the National Convention which will mark an historic step in the life of our Party.

The National Committee is deeply aware of the responsibility that rests upon all of us to bring this period to a successful conclusion.

This awareness rests upon a realization that we must move forward to play our part in big and important mass struggles in the coming months.

The basic achievements of our discussion and Convention will be measured and tested by our ability to enhance the role of our Party in this respect.

The pre-convention discussion has been extensive and has shown deep probing into a wide area of problems out of which have also emerged common views and unity on many important questions. It has demonstrated the will of the Party to break with the sectarianism which the Resolution characterizes as the main factor that has inhibited the unfolding of a more effective mass line of work. It has also begun to express a more democratic content of Party life and organization.

It has been a vigorous and frank discussion and debate. That is all to the good. It should by all means continue

through the section, county and State conventions and in the National Convention.

We are deeply concerned over certain aspects that mar the discussion and may do harm to the unity and effectiveness of the Party. This is certainly true of some tendencies to substitute invective for serious argument. It is also true that some of the sharp, even extreme, controversy including among leading figures in the party, has tended to obscure the main aspects of the Resolution and Draft Constitution and is endangering the unity of the Party.

Whatever differences still exist among us and still need to be resolved by further experience and discussion, our National Committee is agreed upon some basic questions which should unite our Party at the coming convention.

The National Committee reaffirms the main political direction of the Draft Resolution. It does not consider valid any effort to represent it as a departure from our basic scientific theory. No invectives of liquidationism, revisionism, or stand-patism, nor abusive charges with respect to international working-class relations should be permitted to distort the discussion of this document or smother our first efforts to break with the roots of our errors.

As further demonstrated by the National Committee's amendments to the Draft Resolution and the Draft Reso-

\* This message was adopted on Dec. 19, at a National Committee meeting. When released, the statement contained a footnote declaring that it had been adopted "with one abstention (Ben Davis); all others present voting in favor, one with reservations (W. Z. Foster). Those not present will be polled."

lution itself, its members have stated clearly their opposition to any and all proposals to liquidate the Party, or resist necessary changes, to discard our basic theory, or to assume a position of hostility towards the Socialist world.

We are deeply concerned that the cardinal principle of Negro-white unity within our Party and our uncompromising struggle for Negro rights that is founded upon our Marxist-Leninist understanding of the National question should in no way be weakened, but rather strengthened. Even in these next weeks as our discussion draws to a close we need also to plunge into the developing fight for Negro rights, especially around the opening of Congress.

The major contribution made by our Draft Resolution was that it placed before our Party the need—and pointed the way—to develop our theory and policies in a creative, independent manner. This necessarily led to the plowing up of new ground in the searching examinations which our discussion has initiated. But this is a process that is far from completed. It should not be halted, but, rather, it should be encouraged. Consequently, no proposals addressed to making the achievement of our agreed-upon goals more effective should be subjected to hostile labeling or their authors and their motives otherwise made suspect. Failure to curb any such tendencies or practices can only deprive the Party of the full benefit of free discussion or lead to destructive factionalism. All proposals shall be voted upon on their merits.

Our discussion began with the recognition of the necessity to overcome our long-standing Left sectarianism. The Resolution found the main roots of this sectarianism in: 1) The

dogmatic and doctrinaire manner in which we had been attempting to apply Marxism to the American scene. 2) Our oft-time uncritical acceptance of the views of Marxists of other countries. 3) Our bureaucratic system of organization and lack of internal Party democracy. Since then the National Committee has presented a new Draft Constitution which declares in its Preamble:

The Communist Party bases its theory generally on the cultural heritage of mankind and particularly on the teachings of the giants of scientific socialism, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and V. I. Lenin, as interpreted by the Party and creatively applied and developed in accordance with the conditions of the American class struggle, traditions and customs.

We are living through a period of great change in which the world socialist movement must review its policies, program and tactics, re-study long-held theoretical positions and bring itself fully into line with current realities. Our Party must seek to reorient itself not on the basis of adopting one or another set of ideas from abroad but must work out its own course based upon the discussions of our own party, our particular conditions, and our own use of Marxist science. In so doing, we should examine the discussions and proposals, the points of view of Marxists in all countries in a friendly, critical and open-minded fashion.

The National Committee feels that in rounding out and concluding our discussions we should be guided, all of us, by certain considerations. We are convinced that the membership and leadership of our Party is capable of and will resolve many basic issues.

\* \* \*

1) We recognize that this Convention must strike out on a new course to initiate significant changes in our

Party to correspond to changes in the world and our nation as well as to overcome long-standing and deepseated weaknesses.

This Convention will not be the end but rather the beginning of a process of reinvigoration and strengthening of our organization. Of necessity we are mainly determining the main direction and route to travel. Only as we test our policies, tactics and new theoretical concepts in practice will we be able to fully judge their validity and develop them further.

2) Of necessity also we must limit our decisions to those matters that we have had time to discuss, to thoroughly review and to thrash out conclusively. Obviously the Convention must answer the main questions of line and organizational policy as they are projected and amended in the Draft Resolution and Draft Constitution.

Clearly many fundamental matters of theory and program will remain, even matters on which we have and may for some time continue to have widely divergent views. It is therefore important that we see the establishment of full inner-party democracy including the right to dissent as essential also to our ability after this Convention to continue discussing many questions while moving forward unitedly to implement the decisions of the Convention.

Yet we wish to achieve this in the frame-work of basic unity within the Party. Party unity is one of our big assets and should surely be sought with energy. It is timely to restate that we do not wish to proscribe the expression of opinion in this discussion. We want to read no one out of the Party for his views. We know by now that none of us has a monopoly on wisdom and none of us is immune to error. We

should consider the motives of all comrades as honest and that we all share in an equal regard for our Party.

This National Committee meeting, attempting to assess the views and conclusions of the membership, feels that a fundamental basis for unity of the Party and the work of the Convention lies in the general agreement with the main propositions in the first three sections of the Resolution. These sections project a policy on such vital questions as an estimate of the present situation in which we now live and work, the path of struggle toward a labor and people's anti-monopoly coalition, and our views regarding an American Road to Socialism. We feel these will undoubtedly be further strengthened by amendments, bringing the Resolution up to date.

We note that the largest amount of discussion and controversy has revolved around Section 4 dealing most directly with our Party. In order to bring the debate more into focus and to fix attention on a number of issues that have proved most controversial, this National Committee meeting has adopted and now presents for discussion three further additions to the Resolution. We feel these help to make clear also the views of the National Committee upon these important matters. (Party Name and Form, Democratic Centralism, and the Vanguard Role of the Party).

The National Committee is also making public the Agenda of the Convention.

We urge that these closing weeks of debate be conducted with a view to bringing the discussion to a successful conclusion, in a spirit of free debate, free also of acrimony, based upon the basic unity of purpose that binds us together in the fraternity of our Party.

## On the Role of the Party

By Merle Brodsky

*Oakland, Calif.*

WHAT IS THE answer for the Marxist Left in the United States? Some say what is needed is an organization without a "past." Some argue that what is needed is a legal organization. Some say we need an organization firmly based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Some say let us continue as of old with a few changes. Some cry that the Communist Party should dissolve and clear the way for a new organization. Still others say that what we need is a mass party of Socialism.

Let us instead take a look at the American people. Where is America going? What are the trends and developments in the various groups and classes in this country? The American Left must determine its role and forms of organization by the class and political developments in this nation and not on the subjective opinions and wishes of individuals and groups of the Left.

Our organizational forms and program must be conditioned in a large part by the following facts of life: The American working class, with its allies, constitute the only force that can establish Socialism in this nation. It is they, and not a Marxist organization, that will effect a transformation of the social system. Thus the Marxist organization must so mold itself as to be a service organization to

the working class. It dare not fashion itself in any way that would separate it from the working class nor adopt concepts that its actions can be a substitute for those of the working class.

Our organization, its forms, tactics, and program must be conditioned by the class, political and economic developments of this nation. The United States is not Russia. Our working class is not the French, German, or any other working class. It is a class that has and will have its own path of development. Our organization, or any other Marxist organization that wishes to make a contribution, can not have as its starting point only what it thinks must be done. It cannot hope that some day the working class will wake up to how right the organization has been. In short, our organizational forms, tactics, and program must be such as to enable us to "get with the working class," to make it possible for us to become part of the historic forward movement of the working class and through such a relationship lend consciousness of direction to the working-class movement.

As a rule, all growing things, including classes, go through stages. Political and economic events can cause stages to be speeded up, skipped or retarded. Stages are not uniform, or necessarily similar in all countries; on

the contrary, the particular national developments will effect the nature of the stages of the classes in each country. Nor are stages separated one from another by Chinese walls; on the contrary, they grow one within the other, and the relationship of one to another is conditioned by the political and economic events. Thus, to judge the growth of the American working class we must compare where it now stands with where it has come from. Seeing it in this light, and adding to this a concrete examination of the various trends in the class, we might be able to determine which possible positive steps it could take. Such knowledge would help us become a factor in the achievement of these forward steps.

Historically the greatest lack of the American working class has been unity. It has been a class divided against itself. Immigrant versus earlier arrival, skilled against unskilled (earlier craft unions helped prevent organization of unskilled in exchange for concessions), minorities against native born, and minority against minority, Negro divided from white, industrial unions apart from the craft unions, etc. The American working class, almost one hundred years after the Civil War, had not yet achieved the most elementary form of class organization, that is a single trade-union organization that encompassed the majority, and the most decisive sections of the class. This lack contributed to, and was affected by, the failure of any Marxist group to gain a permanent foothold within the working class movement. A class as divided as the U.S. working class, has been a class without the ability to function for its own interests with

any degree of real consciousness.

Has this character of the American working class been altered? We have heard a lot of loose talk about the impact of prosperity on the American working class. Let us see what the facts show.

In 1939 there were only 6,500,000 workers organized into trade unions and these were split. In 1946, the year of the Taft-Hartley act, there were 12,960,000. In 1955 this had increased to 17,010,000. In 1956 it was over eighteen million.

The degree of organization of the working class is concealed by the statistical method used by the Department of Labor. Thus, according to their figures organized labor constitutes about 28 per cent of the total working force. Yet, by their definition, "labor force," includes all self-employed, all professionals, all executives, all salaried workers, all people looking for work, etc. Subtract these, which run into the millions and the percentage of organized workers rises considerably. The same applies to those who work in small stores, offices, are technical workers, etc., who, although they number millions of workers, do not represent main or decisive sections of the working class.

But of more significance is a comparison of the size of the various unions with the total employed in the corresponding industry\*

\* In a number of cases more workers are listed in a union than employed in the industry, because the union covers more than that industry. Yet, in other cases, more unions exist in the field than are listed, thus a balance is achieved.

Industry	Workers Employed	Union Membership and Union Affil.
Primary Metals .....	1,140,000	United Steel Workers ...1,200,000
Transportation Equipment .....	1,400,000	United Auto Workers ...1,239,000
Clothing .....	1,100,000	All Unions ..... 927,000
Food .....	1,100,000	All Unions ..... 729,000
Rubber Products .....	200,000	United Rubber Workers 175,000
Mining .....	430,000	UMW, Mine & Mill..... 500,000
Construction .....	2,527,000	AFL Bldg. Tr. Unions...3,141,000
Transportation .....	2,800,000	All Unions .....2,456,000

Textile, tobacco, chemical and printing, because of conditions in the South, are less organized, yet a total of 901,000 are organized into unions covering these industries. Oil is about two-thirds organized, but scattered into many unions, the largest having over 100,000 workers. A less accurate picture of lumber is available because of overlapping with Carpenters Union.

At this point the skeptic might interrupt us. He might contend that though the number of organized workers has increased, this means very little because, in the main, workers have joined the union only because they had to. What is at stake here is whether or not the consciousness of the working class has increased. Involved is whether or not the increased organizational status of the working class has any chance to become a really permanent feature of American life and, if the working class has achieved an elementary form of class outlook, then more advanced forms of class consciousness become more likely. Again we warn, "more advanced" means in relation to what has been the American workers' outlook and not by comparison with the French or other workers.

Again let us turn to facts. Let us judge the degree of conscious support on the part of the workers by what they did when they had the opportunity, without fear of disclosing their individual position, to accept or reject the Unions. I refer to the Government supervised elections and balloting, conducted in secret, on a number of questions.

Between 1936 and 1954, 11,678,000 votes were cast to determine the question of union representation. Of these 9,198,000 or 78 per cent of the votes cast, were in favor of the unions. From 1948 to 1951, 5,547,000 ballots were cast to determine support or rejection of the union shop. Of these 5,071,000, or 91.4 per cent, were cast in favor of the union shop. From 1944 to 1945 the Smith-Connolly act which ordained government-supervised strike votes, was in existence. Under it 1,926,000 ballots were cast. Despite the existence of a war, 1,593,000, or 82.5 per cent, supported the union recommendation for a strike vote. The legislators had no doubt as to where the support of the workers lay and after one year of operation they repealed the act.

Surveys can be very misleading. To judge their reliability we must examine their content. *Fortune* magazine

conducted a survey some time ago and announced that the results showed that the American worker considers himself part of the middle class and not a worker. Figures don't lie but liars can figure. The question asked by *Fortune* was: Do you consider yourself part of the Upper, Middle, or Lower classes? A majority of workers when confronted with these choices picked the middle class category. However, Richard Centers,\* of Princeton University, set out, among other objectives, to determine the validity of the *Fortune* survey. The results of this survey, are quite revealing. Participants in this survey were asked the following question: If you were asked to use one of these four names for your social class, which would you say you belonged in: the middle class, lower class, working class, upper class, don't know, or don't believe in classes? 71 per cent of the skilled, 83 per cent of the semi-skilled, 75 per cent of the unskilled chose the working class. An additional 7 per cent of the unskilled chose lower class. Perhaps more revealing is the fact that not one of the workers in all three categories of skill stated that they did not believe in classes.

But do the workers have any knowledge of what determines a class? When asked, 79 per cent of the workers listed occupation as the main thing which determined which class you are in. When asked to list what factors aside from occupation determined a class, 46.2 per cent of all manual workers listed beliefs and outlooks.

True, these statistics by themselves may lead to an over rosy picture. But it does appear to be certain that the American working class has made important strides towards maturing as a

class. What is more important is that the growth of numbers and increased consciousness of the workers, alone, does not tell the whole story. With amalgamation there has come into existence one overall trade union, including at least a million and a half Negroes, that encompasses the most decisive sections of the American working class and has within its fold the majority of non-white collar workers.

In 1952 the Marxist movement became more disoriented than ever when it failed to fully recognize that the objective possibilities for amalgamation had materialized and that substantial trends within labor were inclined in that direction. In 1956, when the Marxist movement must re-chart its course, let it not overlook the objective possibilities that exist for the labor movement nor the trends that exist within the trade unions. Let it recognize that the American working class has at last *achieved an elementary state of organization as a class.*

The question is no longer one of whether the labor movement "ought" to participate in political activity. It is now one of what type of political action it will engage in, and in what directions can this political action lead. The answer to these questions will be influenced largely by the following factors: The strength and status of the trade union movement and its new relationship to the class as a whole; political and economic developments on a national and international scale; the divisions and struggles within the labor movement and in the relations between the labor movement and other segments of the American people; the influence of a conscious or Marxist

\* R. H. Centers, *The Psychology of Social Classes* (Princeton University Press, 1949).

sector, or—if such a sector fails to develop a proper relationship to the labor movement then its lack of influence.

Few will deny that labor has gone into politics. What must be noted are the new features emerging around labor's political role. Twice one, does not always equal two. C.O.P.E., the political arm of the merged federation is not simply, the continuation of P.A.C. and L.L.P.E. in a new form. In the previous period the old forms were the political arms of two separate Labor bodies. C.O.P.E., on the other hand, now has the potential of being a political form of at least a decisive section of the class. As the merger proceeds, contradictions, especially between labor and the Democratic Party, achieve a greater potential of exploding. The eighteen million strong labor movement now not only represents the main numerical support for the Democratic Party, but in many instances it represents the most substantial financial support. In some areas, such as Michigan, it is demanding and receiving some payment for this relationship. On one hand labor is moving towards closer ties with the Negro people and on the other, the Negro people are moving further away from the Democratic Party, and thus another set of contradictions is brewing. Both the Labor movement and the huge monopolies of this country are growing at the same time, thus even with the "favorable" economic picture, labor and monopolies are engaging in serious skirmishes. Note the struggles around speed-up, automation and job security questions. The monopolies, because of labor's increased strength, are more and more utilizing their influence in legislative bodies to hamstring Labor. Observe

the rash of states rights and "right-to-work" proposals. Yet the Democratic Party, because of its class and sectional composition, is less and less able to reflect labor's interests on the legislative front.

Labor, of course, does not move as one harmonious grouping in a single direction. On the contrary, many divisions exist within the labor movement over what course should be followed, and the course taken will be determined by the outcome of the contest between the different approaches. What is clear is that the objective status and strength of the organized labor movement is such that its tailing after the Democratic Party kite is presenting it with real problems. The nature of these problems is such that it acts as a stimulus for a more independent political course for labor. Such a course has the potential of reflecting itself, as it has in some cases, within the Democratic Party confines, or, as it has in other instances, in a direction away from the Democratic Party. Let others argue as to whether labor can or cannot take over the Democratic Party. We will simply register the point that a trend towards independent labor political action exists, and if strengthened instead of curtailed or reversed, will lead to a political vehicle, the guts of which will be the mass trade-union movement.

Labor does not develop in a vacuum. The course it takes is determined by its reactions to political and economic events. These events not only provide the content of labor's action, but are also the source of the struggles within the labor movement. We cannot predict the coming political and economic events, though we suspect that they will not all be rosy, but we do contend

coming events will not determine whether or not the powerful trade-union movement will continue to exist. The powerful combination which grew to its present strength despite two wars, a rash of anti-labor legislation, a siege of McCarthyism, etc., will not hold up with the advent of new political and economic happenings. Rather these events will only sharpen the struggle that now exists within the labor movement as to what course it should take.

The outcome of this contest between the various trends in the labor movement cannot be regarded as settled. On one side are those forces, which by their actions and positions, whether it be on one event or many, objectively reflect the interests of the monopolies. All of the political and ideological resources of the monopolies are geared towards strengthening this trend. It represents a dangerous threat to the independent development of the working-class movement. On the other side are those tendencies leading towards independent action. Overall, the factors are favorable for the extension and strengthening of this trend. It is handicapped by the lack of consciousness as to where it is going. Since it is a more spontaneous reaction to events, it is unable as yet to chart a course. Though this trend reflects a reaction of the working-class movement to monopoly domination, it lacks adequate understanding of, and expression against, this main enemy. Thus, each new event has the potential of presenting sources of division and confusion.

This article deliberately singles out the development of the labor movement as its chief concern. Let it be briefly noted that those same forces that are having an impact on the labor

movement are effecting the other important groupings. Thus, movements exist, especially amongst the Negro people, and to a serious extent amongst the farmers and the middle class, that are moving in an anti-monopoly direction. These forces can and do stimulate independent movement in the working class. In the last instances, however, the course taken by these groups will be conditioned by that taken by labor. By themselves, due amongst other things to the whole electoral system here, they are incapable of launching a new electoral alignment. On the other hand, if labor does move it has excellent possibilities of winning these elements to a labor-led electoral alignment. In fact, these groups are more and more turning to labor, as shown in a series of recent events.

No group outside the labor movement can decide by itself that the time is ripe and then go about trying to start such a party, expecting labor and its friends to follow. Any other organization that tries will get the same rebuff the Wallace Party received from labor, as well as other groups.

There can be little doubt as to what effect a conscious Marxist sector could have on the working class movement or that such a conscious sector could influence the unfolding of a new electoral alignment involving the non-monopoly sections of our population. If a Marxist movement were able to become an integral part of the trade-union movement it could help provide that feature most seriously lacking—consciousness of direction. Such a movement, if it could gain influence amongst the Negro people, farmers, and middle class, could aid in the unfolding of a new political alignment. Therefore the question is not whether

or not such a movement (and movements are built through organizations) is desirable. The lack of such a movement increases the groping for direction on the part of the working class. Thus forward movement is always in jeopardy.

A critical goal of a Marxist movement is to help achieve mass socialist consciousness in this country. In order that it not lose its way, it must always keep this aim in the forefront of its considerations. Mass socialist consciousness, however, does not develop in a vacuum. Individuals, thousands of them, can be convinced of Socialism through education and argumentation. But mass socialist consciousness requires certain objective conditions. The type of struggles within the working class and between the working class and the monopolies, and within the atmosphere of current political events is not such as to create any mass receptiveness for Socialism. More than this, any organization that confines its activities solely or primarily to socialist agitation will be firing over the heads of present movements and thus have no effect either on helping accomplish those steps that will bring the working class closer to Socialism or on developing socialist thinking in this Nation.

In light of the present developments, where the possibility exists for a new electoral alignment the question might be asked as to what effect such a development would have on the ultimate formation of a mass socialist party in this country. This is especially important because so many are today projecting calls for both a mass socialist party and a mass anti-monopoly party simultaneously.

If the working class in this nation succeeded in establishing a political

vehicle of its own, in alliance with other groups, would the mass of workers be ready to leave such a party for one that had a socialist perspective? It is hardly likely that present movements in the working class would first unfold into a political vehicle of a socialist nature. The most that could be expected, short of almost catastrophic events, would be a political movement of an anti-monopoly character and even this level is not a certainty.

Perhaps some ideas about this can be drawn from England. In England, as here, mass trade unions were built without a corresponding workers' political party coming into existence. The trade-union movement in England was tied to the liberal bourgeoisie through the Liberal Party. The first major step in an independent direction was the setting up of what were called Labor Representation Committees. These L. R. committees functioned within the confines of the Liberal Party, but were an arm of the labor movement. Further developments led to a split between Labor and the Liberal Party and the British Labor party was launched. It was not until ten years after this party was formed that it adopted a socialist perspective. Those socialist elements in England that based themselves on the Labor party became merged with it; the others remained small groups outside the labor movement.

The likelihood is not that both a mass socialist party and a mass anti-monopoly party will be built side by side in this country. Rather what is most likely is that either a mass non-monopoly party will come into existence and the struggle for a socialist perspective will be fought out within the party, or events will be such that from the

beginning a new mass party will have a socialist perspective. In light of the lack of a long-standing socialist sector in the labor movement and the nature of the forces in the leadership of the trade-union movement, it does not seem too likely that this latter development will confront us.

Regardless of what political forms working-class action takes, the need is to recognize that the main field from which a mass socialist movement must emerge is the working class. A mass socialist vehicle will not come about because individuals or groups think it is a good idea, but only if the Marxist movement in this country is able to effect a merger of socialist consciousness and the working class movement. Thus the starting point of a Marxist movement must be the present trends, developments, and level of the working class movement. A proper estimate of these will not only enable our movement to find those tactics that will end our isolation, but will enable us to become an effective force in helping the working class understand and organize for Socialism.

What type of organization do we need to fulfill this role?

Our organization will have to discard certain *distorted* concepts of what constitutes a vanguard role. No Marxist organization or combination of Marxist organizations is, or is likely to become in the immediate future, the actual leadership of the working class in the sense that the working class or decisive sections of it look to such an organization for leadership. More than this, the immediate problem for us is not how to lead the working class movement, but how to become connected with it.

We cannot make grandiose proposals

to the working class as to what we think it ought to do. Rather we must determine what actions it is now taking which, if strengthened and given more consciousness, will aid the forward movement towards independent action and socialist consciousness.

As part of these movements we can play a role in sighting the enemy, monopoly. Whether it be in joining the fight to repeal the T.H. act or supporting labor's demand to ban H-bomb tests, or any of the numerous other positive proposals that are raised in the labor movement, the opportunity exists around these questions to expose the role of the monopolies.

In order to play such a role it is necessary for the Party to make its own estimates as to what are the possible goals for the workers in the various areas and for the movement as a whole. In this sense it is a vanguard, for it is conscious of the objective process. Yet in the main, what steps the working class will take, at least for the coming period, will not be under the leadership of the Communists, so in the sense of actual physical leadership we will not be the vanguard of the working class. Perhaps this seems obvious, but examine our activity for at least the past ten years and it will be seen that we violated this understanding again and again. For every course of action proposed by the leadership of the T. U. movement we proposed a counter course and expected the workers to follow us.

In order to play such a role we should project what we think are realistic goals for the trade union movement but not project these as though we, instead of the T. U. movement, could accomplish them. The trade union movement and not the Party

will forge a new political alignment. We can play a modest role in helping the working class achieve consciousness of this need, and become part of the movement to organize it.

Our movement must have as a key task the development of socialist consciousness within the labor and general people's movement. We must see the fight for immediate issues not as a diversion from the task of developing socialist consciousness but as an aid to it. In the past we have not tackled the task of winning support for socialist ideas, but have tended to try to only win support for our organization. Many issues within the labor movement such as guaranteed annual wage, speedup, automation, etc., present opportunities for discussion of socialist ideas, even if they are not labelled as such. As long as one supports the issues, he remains part of the movement and gains an ear. If one presents socialist solutions as alternatives to fighting for these immediate needs he becomes isolated and talks to himself. Our movement must further assume the burden of developing a body of live American socialist literature of a popular type. Socialism is a living dynamic thing and can be presented as such.

Our organization must have its own program, not only advocating Socialism but also a substantial section devoted to the improvement of conditions under capitalism. As Socialism is not on the order of the day we must present other alternatives to war and war production. Such a program must be directed towards winning anti-mon-

opoly elements by its positive proposals and not just rely, as the Draft does, on proposals to curb the monopolies. Such a program must include the fight for full equality for the Negro people. Such a program must include the fight for peace and peaceful co-existence without fostering illusions that either will come about or be maintained without struggle.

There are many questions one could go into, such as critical relations with other Parties, forms of organization, etc. These have been adequately dealt with by numerous participants in the discussion.

To the extent the Communist Party is able to build itself, and plays a role in developing socialist consciousness in this country, to that extent it will increase its ability to directly win the support of the workers as an organization. To be effective in these objectives it must become, through its members, part of the labor and people's movement. In the last analysis one is able to lead only according to his strength, in terms of members and those influenced. Thus, the question of "vanguard" will ultimately be resolved, not by opinions as to what ought or ought not be the case, but by unfolding events. As long as the Communist Party bases itself on the working class, sees its role as one of a service organization to the working class and the people's movement, as long as it never attempts to substitute its actions for those of the working class, it will move in the direction of becoming a force in the working class movement.

## Peaceful Co-Existence: A Discussion

Editors, *Political Affairs*:

About a year ago I submitted a communication taking sharp issue with Max Weiss' contention, expressed in your pages, that the American bourgeoisie had ended the threat of war. You did not publish that communication, stating that it was too long and that it misinterpreted Weiss' position. I was assured that he had read it.

Apparently he either completely disagreed or did not take it to heart. For in his article in the November *Political Affairs* he goes even further overboard by stating that the cold war has come to an end or virtually come to an end.

True, his expressions of this theme are a little ambiguous. It is introduced thusly: "The cold war is coming to an end. Much of its superstructure has already been dismantled." Seemingly the process was finalized while the article was being written, for later it is stated: "The ending of the cold war is beginning to recast the outlook of the American people"; and "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. . . ."

Certainly there was a relaxation of international tension during 1955 and part of 1956, a beginning of the breaking up of the cold war. But this was still tentative, requiring a pronounced further development of public intervention to be carried to a successful conclusion, above all in the United States. Meanwhile, the very powerful

pro-war cliques were and are doing everything to reverse that trend, to bring the cold war back to a hotter and more sinister stage.

I do not know which cold war phenomena Mr. Weiss would classify as structure, and which as superstructure. But the American network of military bases, the system of anti-Soviet military pacts, the enormous military budget, are still intact. The operations of the Central Intelligence Agency, of Radio Free Europe, etc., remained throughout a source of provocation and aggravation of international relations.

Weiss tells us that "barriers to east-west trade are crumbling everywhere", but it must be admitted that the most complete barrier, that involving U.S. trade, has never opened more than a hair's-breadth. Further, he states that as a result of relaxed popular pressure:

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.

All this hardly sounds like the *ending* of the cold war!

I share the author's enthusiasm for Stevenson's raising of the issue of prohibiting H-bomb tests. But one cannot but note the militancy of the Republicans in opposing this. Nor the extent to which Stevenson himself wiped out its value by demanding, especially towards the end of the campaign, higher

arms spending and a more aggressive policy in relation to Egypt and Hungary.

Clearly, Mr. Weiss' remarks were written before the actual invasion of Egypt, and before the counterrevolutionary uprising in Hungary. But from the above discussion it should be clear that even prior to these events the evidence was overwhelming that the cold war was far from over, that its ending remained the prime task of progressive forces everywhere. For example, in August the President announced an increase in this fiscal year's budget estimates for defense spending. And in the first half of October, Defense Secretary Wilson projected a 10% rise in the fiscal 1958 military budget. Still earlier the Administration asked for, and partly got, an extreme increase in military foreign aid authorizations.

Recent events in the Middle East and Eastern Europe should make it obvious that Mr. Weiss' conclusion is, to say the least, exaggerated. In connection with the Hungarian events, oil barons and others behind Radio Free Europe, if not official organs of the U.S. Government, engaged in the most dangerous interventionism—a point now conceded by the conservative press of Western Europe. American officials, as in the U.N., have engaged in an orgy of unrestrained anti-Soviet slander not surpassed in any phase of the cold war.

Extremely powerful circles of Big Business are engaged in a furious campaign to wipe out all of the beginnings of Geneva, and to raise international tension to a new high pitch. Let me cite *Business Week*, which cannot be regarded as an irresponsible organ speaking only for its editors:

The Kremlin has buried the Geneva spirit in Hungary. It can hardly revive until an entirely new regime, aiming at the transformation rather than the defense of Communism, comes to power in Moscow. . . .

Out of the window now is the gradual but spasmodic development of Western contacts with the Russians since the Geneva summit meeting. . . . Trade may not be entirely cut off, but it is sure to shrink back to the cold war level.

—"Peaceful coexistence"—the achievement of a stable power balance between East and West by gradual compromise—is impossible so long as the Communists are ruling Russia . . . the cold war is back, colder than ever. (Nov. 10, 1956, pp. 40, 157).

Of course, the ability of Big Business to realize this "tough" perspective is something else again. The strength of world forces for peace and for ending the cold war is great indeed. But to assume their victory is to be a Pollyanna, and even more to run away from one's own responsibility in the weakest and most crucial sector of the entire world peace front—right here in the United States.

And this leads to what is perhaps the main point—Weiss' article is much more than a matter of careless formulation. It reflects a widespread underestimation of the continued prime importance of the struggle for peace, and of the role of United States imperialism as the main seat of the war danger. For example, the Draft Resolution of the Communist Party, in discussing the growth of monopoly power and monopoly as the main enemy of the American people, simply does not mention the most salient feature of its postwar growth—the mushrooming of its imperialist character, of its foreign properties and its exploitation of other countries; nor does it set any policy for the American Left in relation to

the struggles of peoples abroad against American imperialism.

Starting from such a gross omission, we have such "careless" mistakes as Weiss' attributing to Britain the overthrow of the Mossadegh regime, when American popular magazines boasted of the primary role of U.S. diplomats and arms in that reactionary coup. To assume that U.S. imperialism will stick to exclusively peaceful means to accomplish its objective—correctly placed by Weiss—of moving in on the Suez Canal, is to gild the lily and risk being made a fool of by history.

The whole world realizes the danger of our moving backwards towards the worst disasters. How else can one account for the somber warnings of Nehru, the proposal of the Swiss Government for a new five-power conference, the very far-reaching concessions by the Soviet Union in the latest of its persistent attempts to achieve almost any sort of start towards disarmament?

Thinking Americans, above all responsible Marxists, must concentrate no little of their energies on the absolutely vital job of helping develop a more accurate understanding right here of the situation, and a greater participation of the American people in combatting the cold war and the war danger generally.

The easy optimism I attack stands in the way of such an effort. And I cannot take it for granted that the outbreak of fighting in Egypt and U.S. provocations in respect to Hungary will automatically correct the illusions. I have heard too many attempts to fit these events into the same frame of reference—e.g. Look how good the situation is, the British and the French

were forced to stop their invasion of Egypt!

But they started it. And at least until they are out of there, they may resume it. And they continue without let to attack Algeria, Cyprus, Malaya, the meantime getting U.S. aid.

I too am optimistic about the chances of victory in the struggle for peace. But only if we carry out that struggle with a full appreciation of its importance, and with every ounce of energy and skill.

I sincerely hope that this time my criticism of Mr. Weiss' views will be published promptly and in full.

LOUIS FLEISCHER.

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#### *Editors, POLITICAL AFFAIRS:*

Mr. Fleischer takes issue with my contention that American imperialism has ended in the present period, its former policy of threatening to unleash a world atomic war. But he does not substantiate his view. In my opinion, he cannot.

If, in the present period, Wall Street policy were characterized by such a policy of threatening world atomic war, the Egyptian and Hungarian situations would have dramatized that fact. They did no such thing.

In the Egyptian situation, the policy of American imperialism was to bring the fighting to an end; it did not have a policy of spreading the conflagration. In the Hungarian situation, the policy of American imperialism was essentially the Lippmann line of "stabilizing the situation at the Tito level"; it did not have a policy of expanding the armed struggle in that country into a world conflagration.

In neither case did the policy of American imperialism originate in any considerations of sweet reasonableness. It stemmed from a purely cold-blooded calculation of the strength and power of the forces opposed to a world war, including the strength of peace sentiment among the American people as shown in two national elections.

The fact that American imperialism, in the present period, does not conduct its policy, as it did at the height of the cold war, by threats of unleashing an atomic war does not mean that the danger of such a war has been ended. So long as imperialism exists such a danger will exist. But that is not what is being discussed. What is at issue is the current policy of American imperialism; is it being conducted by threats to unleash a world war or not? In the present period, in my opinion, it is not conducting a policy of threatening to unleash a world war. By denying this, Mr. Fleischer flies in the face of reality and does not see what is new in the fight for peace as compared, let us say, to the days of the Indo-China war when American imperialism publicly threatened to intervene militarily.

Our differences on this question are also at the heart of our differences on the Cold War. And these differences cannot be resolved by a discussion of formulations, whether they be in my article or in Mr. Fleischer's letter. The ending of the cold war is a process, a process involving serious struggles. If any formulations in my article could be interpreted to mean that this process is already completed they are obviously wrong, or as Mr. Fleischer puts it "ambiguous."

But the nub of our differences is over

whether this process is under way or not. Is there nothing new in the cold war today over and above a "relaxation of tensions?" There was a relaxation of tensions when the Berlin air-lift was ended. There was a relaxation of tensions when negotiations were begun on the Korean war. There have been many moments in the Cold War when extreme tensions were relaxed. But they were relaxed in the context of an ascending curve of development of the cold war. This is not the case today. The Cold War has passed its peak because American imperialism has been compelled by a whole series of political, diplomatic and military defeats to put an end to its policy of threatening to unleash a world war.

The cessation of threats to unleash a new world war has set into motion centrifugal tendencies in the structure of the cold war—both in the superstructure and base. Perhaps Mr. Fleischer does not believe that the barriers to east-west trade are crumbling. But I think he entertains a lonely view. Obviously, American barriers are crumbling more slowly than those erected by the cold war partners of America. But the cold war is not an exclusively American phenomenon—like the policy of nonrecognition of the USSR in the pre-Roosevelt period. Perhaps Mr. Fleischer does not think that NATO is straining at the seams. But I think, here also, he entertains a lonely view. Only spit and paste still hold some other countries in NATO. Other aspects of the cold war, like military bases, armaments programs, etc. are still largely unaffected but even here new developments are in the offing, and will be accelerated if the struggle around these issues continues and in-

creases as there is every indication that it is doing.

To assert, as Mr. Fleischer does, that this process is only "beginning," that it is only "tentative," is to lag behind the times. Such an estimate would have been accurate and sufficient in the spring of 1955. To assert it today is to underestimate the progress which the forces of peace have made since then. To recognize this progress need not lull the peace forces; it can rather encourage them. The masses fight hard not only when they sense acute peril but also when they scent victory. There are dangers in either case which have to be avoided—fatalist passivity in one, complacent passivity in the other. I believe it is possible to recognize advances without being beguiled by them.

To bring the process of ending the cold war to a conclusion, to liquidate the cold war completely, will require stubborn struggles. The policy of the main sections of American monopoly is still to continue the cold war. That is why, even as this process unfolds as a result of the people's struggles, there may be certain moments when tensions will increase momentarily. But unless there is a qualitative change in the international situation, such momentary increases in tensions, as in the case of Egypt or Hungary, will not cancel out the main features of the period we are in today. It seems to me that this is what we must cling to in our estimate of current developments.

MAX WEISS

## A Communication

By Joseph Starobin

TO THE EDITORS:

Allow me, simply for the sake of the historical record, to comment on those references to my views which appear in five separate articles by leaders of the American Communist Party in *Political Affairs*, October and November, 1956.

I am much indebted, first of all, to William Z. Foster. He now confirms what was only a hint in my letter to *The Nation* for August 25, 1956. He reveals that proposals for some basic changes in Party policy and practices were put forward quite some time ago by myself, and independently, by Joseph Clark. It was not "early in 1954," as Foster now remembers it, but half a year before, shortly after we returned from our newspaper posts in Peking and Moscow. In fact, my own views began to take shape in a series of private letters to colleagues on *The Worker*, and to Party leaders, beginning in 1951.

What was this "first serious element of political confusion in the Party," as Foster now calls it without explaining why he took so long to expose it and how it was dealt with? In his view (October, 1956 *Political Affairs*) Clark and I considered "the Party's fight against the war danger both wrong and fruitless," and this is supposed to have led us into nothing less than "shielding American imperialism from attack," undermining the "hard-pressed Party's morale," etcetera.

No proof is offered for such grave charges. Without taking space for a

chapter and verse analysis, I can only point out that no one thought the Party's fight against war was wrong. Like so many others, I took a whole-hearted part in it, and served throughout 1950-51 as secretary of the Party's national commission on peace activities, a time when some achievements were registered. What I began to consider wrong, for the very reason that it impeded these peace activities, was a conception of post-war development that might be called "cataclysmic."

A theory dominated the Party's work that no matter what happened, the only way out for American imperialism was world war. If the imperialists had their way, they would make war; if they were blocked, they would do so out of desperation. The Party became permeated by a sort of "headline mentality"—a concept that it was always "high noon"—which made it hard to distinguish the real trend of events. Instead of confidence in winning the peace, a definite hysteria took hold.

It does not seem to have occurred to Party leaders among whom Foster was the most influential that if imperialism had its way, why would it have to make war? Perhaps it might be striving to achieve some objectives without war? Or that, if imperialism were blocked, there might be a truce, or even a settlement. It was also possible that the decisive circles of American capitalism, faced by many-sided obstacles, still retained enough confidence in themselves to enter into

peaceful competition, instead of a project as dangerous as world war. The Party became so accustomed to abstract denunciation of imperialism, as a substitute for practical political action, that the concept of being able to impose a period of peace prior to the transformation of imperialist relations was viewed as heretical doctrine.

My own view was that the nature and scope of tempo of the cold war were being misjudged. The real relationship of world forces, arising out of the defeat of the Axis, was proving stronger than all the attempts to reverse that relationship. New factors were operating—such as the end of the atom bomb monopoly, the Chinese Revolution, the rise of a world consciousness for peace—all of which had developed, it should be noted, by 1951.

It was never a matter of minimizing how aggressive were many forces in American life, nor denying the rightness of making the issue of peace the central aspect of the Party's work; it was a matter of recognizing that the cold war was not necessarily a prelude to world war but a struggle to determine the terms of some kind of settlement, within the framework of which the rivalry of the systems would continue peaceably, though not automatically or smoothly. I said this in many ways at that time. The Party's own Draft Resolution of September, 1956, like the Dennis report last April, now admits the misjudgment and recognizes it as a crucial aspect of the Party's deep-rooted sectarianism.

Who really considered the Party's fight against war fruitless? Consider the "Operation Security" which engulfed the whole Party from 1950 until 1956—the attempt to combine some sort of "underground" with the fight

for legality. What did it mean to the Party membership and to the world? It was a definitive political judgment that the Party's fight against war until then had been fruitless. More, it was an estimate that the whole world campaign for peace was likely to be so fruitless that within a short time the only way to maintain an American Communist movement would be through an "underground."

I make no abstract comment on the need for "security," which might have been accomplished in many ways. Nor do I cast a shadow on the personal courage and selflessness of the leaders and the cadres of this enterprise, and their families, just as I mean no personal reflection on Foster himself. But it was a testimonial to fruitlessness. It stemmed from Foster's way of seeing things. Many may have thought they were in step with a world outlook. Perhaps a better perspective on this whole era will show the American Communist Party contributed as much to the misunderstanding of American reality elsewhere as did foreign Communists to the misunderstanding from which the American Party suffered. Perhaps the real disservice to international solidarity was the responsibility of American Communists.

The famous "war danger" issue was only one aspect—in fact only the form—of a conflict of views which come under the heading of what Foster now calls "Americanization." The conviction had been growing in me over many years that the strategy and tactics of other Communists were simply not valid for this country, that we had specific—yes, exceptional—conditions. I felt that little progress was possible without a clear break with the habits of thought and the system of leader-

ship, carried over from the bygone era of the Communist International in which so many leaders and members had been shaped.

I do not claim to have had a fully-fashioned outlook to this effect, only elements of it. Nor did I return home in August, 1953 with more than an inkling of the crisis maturing in the Soviet Union. But I did feel strongly that by 1953 the war danger had plainly receded so that even those who oversimplified it in 1951 could see it; hence it was urgent to re-examine all policies and practices quickly. To those who needed to read the zodiac signs in the world Communist firmament, the events of that year should have been persuasive; my feeling was that the American Party had every warrant to act on its own policies, independently and autonomously. If the Party could not take its own initiatives, the very fact of acting only after others did would continue outmoded relationships in a disastrous way.

Why were Clark and myself so impatient, and not-a-little stubborn? Because it was perfectly clear that a deadlock in leadership had prevailed ever since 1945. Many Party leaders had hesitated over the "way-out-in-left-field" policies, relating them not to the "war danger" thesis but other considerations. Many realized that after 1945, the Party might have gone back, so to speak, to 1935—when American Communists did some real things and helped our people solve real problems: to return to 1925 was "out of this world."

But there was always a well-defined group around Foster, more dynamic than any other, which waved "the bloody shirt" of "Browderism" at every opinion contrary to their own.

Many who opposed them thought the rough edge could be taken off Foster's views; others believed a mistaken course could be corrected if "managed" properly. Yet they were driven, often against their better judgment, along a ruinous path.

This inner paralysis was continuing in 1953. When Clark's views, and then my own, were made available to Party leaders on some levels, they said they agreed and that they had reached the same conclusions. Nonetheless, it seemed to me that nothing was being done. These men were the real Fabians, as they had been for many years.

Foster is mistaken when he speaks of a "disruptive agitation." There was so little "agitation" that the rank and file and most leading people knew nothing about this conflict until late in 1956. Neither did Foster and his aides invite much discussion; and thus a situation was created, to use a famous phrase, "nasty, brutish, and short." My protest was a refusal to re-register. The whole experience raised the deepest moral and political issues, calling into question long-time loyalties to ideas and friends. I understand very well that this dilemma was not unusual. It is now admitted that hundreds, if not thousands, of Party members suffered ostracism, threats of expulsion, and more, for voicing independent proposals or balking a sectarian course.

My activities thereafter were confined to writing and lecturing on the Left, which I considered an obligation. Perhaps other men, returning from jail and elsewhere, would face up to their responsibilities. In any case, it was for the Party itself to tell the story. By the Spring of 1955, the Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation — which really anticipated the Soviet Twentieth

Congress—raised questions about Socialist development far more basic than the old "war danger" debate. By then, history was proving very dramatically who had been right and wrong. It turned out that some Party leaders, who had made their own reappraisals in jail, were not able to take the helm of change prior to the Soviet Congress, though they tried to. Others did not even then recognize the issues. And the Congress itself deflected the American debate to a terrain which was unfavorable as much as it was favorable.

It is certainly true that a new spirit blows in the *Daily Worker*, and a genuine search for a new course exists in some Party levels. But the mountainous labors that brought forth so little during the crucial Spring and Summer of 1956 only reflected the deep contradictions in the Party leadership, its lack of candor and political courage. This finally decided me that whatever I could contribute on the Left would have to be done differently than in the past.

In the same October, 1956 *Political Affairs*, Eugene Dennis takes issue with various negative attitudes toward the Communist Party and says: "Still others, such as Starobin, invite us to 'disband,' 'fade away,' and thus allegedly 'facilitate the emergence of a new party of Socialism.'" If Dennis was quoting me, I do not know where he got the words. They are nowhere to be found in the *Nation* letter. Herbert Aptheker, who has a rather more serious reputation for scholarship than Dennis, also has me believing (in the November 1956 issue) that the Party should be dissolved. He differs from Dennis in placing no quotes around his own misunderstanding. I regret that

Steve Nelson shares a similar view, though in a more tentative way.

It does not seem to have occurred to these commentators that the *Nation* letter was not written to them, but to a Mr. Benjamin of San Francisco who believed that the revival of a new Left depended on the Party's self-dissolution. My reply was that Benjamin oversimplified on two counts. I challenged him to take steps toward a revival of the Left irrespective of what the Communists do about their own Party; I urged him to do so without "a lamentation of how fine everything would have been had the American Communists never existed, or in making believe none exist now while urging them to dissolve." As for the Party, it is true that I doubt whether it can regenerate itself or the American Left and I believe something new must supersede it, which is different from demanding from the outside that it dissolve here and now, and unless it does, nobody else can do anything.

Aptheker asks for evidence to support such doubts. If the American people can be confidently expected to choose Socialism over capitalism, why can't a few thousand Communists change their own party, he asks, as though this were a perfect syllogism. Perhaps the problem of the American people as a whole can be resolved, whereas a particular political formation has, by now, insoluble problems?

Max Weiss considers that the built-in principles of the Party distinguish it from any forerunner and make self-correction inevitable. This does not exactly explain why Max Weiss has had such difficulties over ten years in applying such principles to achieve the Party's correction. To Weiss, the Draft Resolution is a "most incisive refuta-

tion" of my doubts. A strange word—"incisive" for such a document, even granting that it charts a forward course which it hesitates to pursue.

John Gates recognizes that neither my views nor actions are personal; they represent a challenge that comes to the Party from many quarters, including present members. He disagrees with me sharply, but presents a program which he thinks will make possible peaceful competition among Socialists.

I do not call upon the Party to dissolve, and never have. Nobody is keeping Weiss or Aptheker from applying their principles. If they resent the suggestion of their political impotence (about which many others have had a more anguishing experience than I) it is up to them to provide a potent rebuttal. I will not be the last to acknowledge that, if and when it comes.

Consider a report of the New York state organizational director in *Party Voice*, July 1956. This document says that "over the last ten years we have lost more than two-thirds of our membership." The report then says "of our present membership one-third are industrial workers." Of the total, no more than 20-30 percent are engaged in sustained activities" and "no more than 30-40 per cent attend meetings even on an irregular basis." Moreover, "two-thirds of our present membership is over 40 years old, with no recruiting taking place."

What do such figures mean, remembering they speak of last July, and granting that the situation may be different say, in California. These figures mean that the specific gravity of all those Party members who are not really connected with productive processes,

or even community activities, has risen sharply. Behind the statistics are human beings we have all known. They are fine, able people, with bright memories and deep loyalties. But do they constitute the kind of party they themselves desire? Can they regenerate the American Left? It may be more true that resistance to change in ideas and methods comes most strongly from them. And since they comprise a larger sector of a smaller group, their weight is felt more heavily in opposition to anything except what they have known.

As for the several thousand Party members who are in shops and community activities, I know many of them, have enjoyed the hospitality of their homes and tried to serve them. They do a job that no one can sneer at, and the Party has given them a certain cohesion and guidance. But what is their chief characteristic? Let it be put frankly: while many are known as Left-wingers, for the most part they function in political anonymity, and they do not take responsibility as Communists. They can't.

It is not a matter of finding fault or allocating it. The historic dilemma of the American Communists has been that so many effective leaders and members could not take responsibility for the Party as such; it is here that so many problems of leadership and so much of the source of bureaucracy lies. Such people cannot dissolve what they have, and nobody should ask it of them. But if the Party can be re-made, do not these, of all people, have to welcome policies of change, and provide new personnel and a fresh outlook?

Max Weiss is aghast that I favor—in terms of the American Left as a whole—something different than the

kind of party the Communists have tried to be. He calls it a "Fabian society," and considers it a backward step. The Communists, he is sure, will not break down doors to join it, and "it is difficult to believe that this is offered seriously as an instrumentality for generating a Socialist revival."

I am proposing nothing for which there is no real need or prospect. Many Socialist-minded people feel that a period of "dis-unification" on the Left, of a freedom from any organizational forms enables them to re-think and re-study best. I respect this feeling and know how it comes about. It is not in my thinking that a "Fabian society" would itself be the organization to lead Americans through the difficult transitions of Socialism at some future time, nor that it would be *the* organization on the Left. Perhaps its function would be no more than to organize the necessary discussion on the Left.

But it would be, in the light of cold realities about the Communist Party as well as the present moment in national life, a step forward. For whom? For those who no longer can function by the forms and ideas they had previously accepted. For at least a part of the three quarters of a million Americans who came into and left the Communist Party over 25 years, for at least part of the several millions who were ready to vote the Wallace ticket in 1948—yes, for those younger people, north and south, east and west,

Negro and white workers and non-workers who have questions about present-day America which go unanswered.

It is not for any single individual or group to form such a movement, just as I do not think it can come from the ex-Trotskyites or the Communists. Nobody can re-make the past, even if he wants to do better, nor can any group inherit the capital organization. Such a movement needs to be educational within itself and beyond itself, which is in no sense to weaken the activities that are going on all around us through established organizations. Such a movement needs democratic debate, re-study, honest argument, and I think it cannot have more than a sympathetic detachment towards Socialist and Communist forces abroad. It will come as people listen to each other, and more than that—hear each other. The basis for it exists in groups that are functioning throughout the country. The disdain which Max Weiss shows for such a proposal, or at most a grudging tolerance, may be a measure of his grasp of reality, but also an advantage to such a movement.

When it comes, it will supersede for most of us what we have known, without prejudicing the future. It may only be a halfway house. And many who do not see the need for it today may tomorrow ask—and find—a welcome in it.

# 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 thirties, and to the death of Stalin and after.

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