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A. Zanzolo

THE "IMPOSSIBLE" CANDIDATE

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PRESENT NEEDS IN THE STUDY OF
AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY

Herbert Aptheker

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The Struggle for Nigerian Unity*

The greatest danger at present facing Africa is neo-colonialism and its major instrument, balkanization.

—Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*.

The tragic civil war in Nigeria drags on. All over the world foreboding and anxiety increase over this conflict in the largest state of Africa. This is not only because of the events within Nigeria itself. Owing to its size and position on the continent, and the issues it raises, the conflict in Nigeria challenges the principles and assumptions on which every African state is founded. If Nigeria fails to settle its problems and breaks up in civil war over the issue of tribal, ethnic or national incompatibility, no African state can safely claim stability.

With one or two exceptions the problems faced by Nigeria occur in one way or another in every African state. Therefore, for Africans and their well-wishers all over the world, this is not an ordinary conflict but goes to the root of their existence as modern, and even Pan-African units.

Some people have argued that this is not a general African issue and that the break-up of Nigeria would be the result of unique features capable of examination on their merits, separate and distinct from any other situations elsewhere. Such an attitude can only be based on ignorance of African social realities and an underestimation of the trouble-making potential of world imperialism, which skillfully utilized African tribal divisions in the nineteenth century to conquer the whole continent, and now seeks to do so again to retain economic and strategic advantages.

As with all conflicts with world-wide implications, that of Nigeria has aroused widely divergent views. Unfortunately, even among progressives, there is utter confusion as to the attitude that should be adopted on this issue. Much of this is due to the sheer complexity of the Nigerian situation. But it also arises from the growing habit of drawing superficial conclusions developed out of "crisis" treatment of situations as they follow one another whether it be the Middle-East, Nigeria or Czechoslovakia. There is insufficient study of the African continent in depth from the viewpoint of Marxist teachings.

* This article was written especially for *Political Affairs*. Comrade Zanzolo is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa.

There are few Marxist-Leninist parties in Africa. Yet, even with this in mind, it is remarkable that in a continent confronted by real and serious problems of nation-building at all levels, there should be so little indigenous research and literature on ethnic, tribal or national issues.

Background to the Crisis

Nigeria, like every former colonial territory in the world, is a territorial creation of the imperialists who ruled it until recently. The boundaries of African countries, including Nigeria, were fixed, delineated or recognized by the European imperialist powers. Inasmuch as the imperialists were moved by mercenary considerations, no attention was paid to linguistic, ethnic or cultural factors. Diverse peoples were thrown together under a particular administration without regard to conditions. Nigeria had its boundaries similarly fixed barely two generations ago. The Hausa-Fulani, Ibo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Efik and many other previously separate peoples were governed by a foreign, central administration called the Nigerian government. The Hausa-Fulani were largely Muslim in religion whilst other people, especially the Ibo and Yoruba, produced large Christian communities.

As the struggle for independence from the British gained momentum after World War II, the question arose sharply as to what sort of Nigeria would emerge after independence. The vanguard nationalist organization at the time was the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. This organization and its leader campaigned vigorously not only for "One Nigeria" but also for a "United States of Africa." In his *Political Blueprint* (1945), Dr. Azikiwe envisaged the creation of a Nigeria with eight states under a central government. Not only was this campaign vigorously pursued through Dr. Azikiwe's party and chain of newspapers, but the British imperialists were charged with trying to split Nigeria into a number of weak, impotent states as a device for maintaining control after independence.

At the other end of the scale was the Hausa-Fulani feudal aristocracy led by Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, who were suspicious of independence and more than once threatened to secede rather than remain in a Nigeria dominated by the better-educated Yoruba and Ibo in the South.

The Yoruba, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, emerged as the advocates of federalism. In his *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947), Chief Awolowo thought Nigeria should be divided into as many as forty

states under a federal government.

The debate raged throughout the fifties in the lively Nigerian press and political life. It is quite a revelation to study the positions adopted then with what has happened since.

Independence and After

In 1959, the last elections before independence were held. The main parties contesting were the Action Group led by Chief Awolowo, with its main support in the Western Region among the Yoruba; the NCNC of Dr. Azikiwe based mainly in Eastern Nigeria among the Ibo; and the Nigerian People's Congress led by Sir Ahmadu Bello in Northern Nigeria with largely Hausa-Fulani support. In the three regions into which Nigeria had been divided, numerous elections had been held, which always resulted in these parties respectively controlling the region inhabited by their main ethnic support. To many this appeared to be a built-in prescription for future trouble.

The 1959 elections, on which the main parties spent millions of pounds, ended with no party obtaining an absolute majority in the Federal Parliament. The NCNC and the Nigerian People's Congress formed a coalition government with Sir Abubaker Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister, and Dr. Azikiwe as Governor-General and later President of the Republic of Nigeria. Chief Awolowo took his place as Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament.

What Classes Did These Parties Represent?

The dominant class in Nigeria was and remains the British imperialists who hold the giant share of the economy. Such giants as Level Brothers and United Africa Company occupy the commanding heights. British interests were generally considered to be closest to the feudal elements in Northern Nigeria represented by the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Naturally the NPC itself was firmly under the control of the landed feudal chiefs, emirs and sardaunas.

The Action Group, which was perhaps the wealthiest party, represented the plantation owners of the Western region who produced cocoa, palm oil and rubber. The party was a very active mass party with the aristocratic families and chiefs in control.

The NCNC was the party of the commercial, trading and transport interests—the vital middlemen who made the wheels of trade move all over Nigeria. The Ibos were to be found everywhere in Nigeria and were, therefore, most interested in the creation of a single national market. It is not surprising that the most vigorous exponents of

"One Nigeria" were to be found in the NCNC.

The workers, who were organized in a split trade union movement, had no political party of their own and oscillated from one to the other of the major groupings.

It should be emphasized that the political parties and groups strove for mass support, but the competition between them represented the interests of the various sections of the national or compradore bourgeoisie, and not those of the workers or peasants.

When the British administration ended in 1960, the NPC-NCNC were in power. The coalition did everything to increase their power and wealth at the expense especially of the Yoruba.

A new region was carved out of part of the Western region called the Mid-West in 1963. In the Mid-West elections, the NCNC won control of the region. Allegations of corruption were charged against the Action Group leaders of which the so-called National Bank inquiry was one. When the Action Group split as a result of a challenge to Chief Awolowo by his rival, Chief Akintola, the federal authorities did everything to assist the latter. Finally, Chiefs Awolowo and Enahoro were arrested on obviously trumped-up charges of plotting to overthrow the government. The conviction and imprisonment of these men spelled grave dangers for Nigeria. Constant turbulence, leading to violence, became endemic in the Western region. The federal army was used to prop up the unpopular Akintola administration. In those days, no one would have dreamt that from the Ibo ruling group the demand for secession would come. The Ibo were ruling the roost with their NPC colleagues.

The coalition government pursued a conservative, pro-Western policy which met with increasing resistance in the country. The Defense Treaty with Britain, which came into force on Independence Day in 1960, was abrogated under mass pressure. In 1964, a general strike organized by the trade unions, achieved a complete stoppage for days. The ruling class had to negotiate with the workers for better conditions of work and increased wages.

In the meantime, conditions in the coalition itself were far from stable. The NCNC wanted a more forward-looking national policy on economic matters. The development of the oil industry in the NCNC-controlled regions of the East and Mid-West encouraged the NCNC to make a bid for seniority in the coalition. Eventually the NCNC and NPC could not maintain their joint government.

In the 1964 elections, the NCNC joined in an alliance with the Action Group and the trade unions. The NPC joined with Chief

Akintola's split-off from the Action Group. The elections were a cruel farce. There was wholesale corruption, particularly in the Northern region. In numerous constituencies, candidates could not reach nomination offices because they were detained until after closing time on petty infringements. In the election itself, Premier Sir Tafawa Balewa claimed victory for his alliance. On the other side, Dr. Okpara (who replaced Dr. Azikiwe as NCNC leader when the latter became Head of State) claimed that he had won. Dr. Azikiwe eventually proposed the formation of a national government to include all elements with Sir Abubaker Tafawa Balewa as Premier.

Throughout the years of independence, there has been a swift accumulation of capital by various interests represented in the coalition government. Utilizing government patronage and power, wealth flowed into the pockets of the politicians, their supporters and the higher civil service bureaucracy.

External capital also poured in, particularly after the discovery of the huge oil deposits in the Eastern and Mid-West regions. Shell Oil and other international oil groups, perhaps the most ruthless manipulators in the world, entered Nigerian politics with all the methods perfected for decades in the Middle-East.

The Military Coups

On January 15, 1966, the first military coup broke out in Nigeria, organized by young Ibo officers. The Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar, was killed. So was Chief Akintola, the Yoruba Premier of the Western region and Sir Ahmadu Bello, Saraduna of Sokoto and leader of the NPC. The President of Nigeria, Dr. Azikiwe, was at the time in Britain, convalescing after an illness. The Acting-President, Dr. Nwafor Orizu—an Ibo—in the name of the federal cabinet handed over the government to General Ironsi—also an Ibo and head of the army.

In the beginning, the coup was widely welcomed for varying reasons. Some people thought it would introduce clean government. Others were pleased that the "old gang" of all political parties had been retired. Still others thought the structural imbalance in the federation would be ended.

It did not take long, however, for the agitation against the military government to develop. The chief accusation against it was that it represented the Ibo and was interested only in fostering their interests. On May 24, 1966, without warning, General Ironsi published a decree imposing a unitary system of government on the country and abolishing the regional authorities. Five days later the first anti-Ibo

riots broke out.

On July 29, 1966, another military coup took place which overthrew the Ironsi regime. Major-General Yakubu Gowon assumed power.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ojukwu, military governor of the Eastern region, preached defiance of the new government. On September 29, 1966, there were fresh outbreaks against the Ibos in the Northern region. There were counter-attacks on non-Ibos in the Eastern region. The federal authorities claimed at the time that 5,000 people of all tribes had died in these communal riots, the majority of whom were Ibos. The Ibos claimed the figure was 30,000 or more. Many Ibos fled from the other regions to the Eastern region. The figure of these has been estimated at almost two million.

The Aburi Talks

Many attempts were made to resolve the problems that had arisen. Talks were held by the military and civil servants, the most important of which were held at Aburi in Ghana. Although the Gowon government released Chiefs Awolowo and Enahoro, political parties remained proscribed. The people of Nigeria were not consulted by the military authorities. There was no talk of a plebiscite or referendum. The inexperienced military leaders thought that agreement about the brother officers was all that was needed to solve the problems of the 55 million Nigerians. No agreement could be reached among the military leaders.

On May 27, 1967, the federal government announced the formation of a federal structure with twelve states, more in accord with the ethnic realities of Nigeria and designed to ensure that no state was big enough to dominate the rest. Four days later, Colonel Ojukwu declared the Eastern region an independent state, under the name of "Biafra."

First Reactions to Secession

Inside Nigeria itself the reactions to the secession was one of shocked disbelief. The federal military government immediately dubbed it a rebellion and prepared to put it down. In the rest of the world, the far more dangerous situation in the Middle-East absorbed all attention.

After the Arab-Israeli June war and the closing of the Suez Canal, Nigeria once more claimed attention. The imperialist powers were very cautious and cool. In fact, it was almost impossible to tell what they intended to do. The imperialist power with the biggest interests in Nigeria was Britain. The dilemma for Britain was that the oil lay in

seceded Biafra, while its biggest investments, outside of oil, were in the territory controlled by the federal government. In these circumstances, Britain's attitude was passive. The confused situation for Britain was demonstrated in the dither over the payment of royalties which Ojukwu demanded had to be made direct to Biafra. The federal authorities threatened that if the royalties were not paid to them, drastic action would be taken against British interests in Nigeria. The situation was changed by two important events.

In August and September, 1967, forces from Biafra advanced swiftly into the Mid-West region and established the so-called "Benin" Republic under Ibo control. At this stage, the demand for independence and secession was replaced by the demand for the overthrow of the federal government. The struggle for control of Nigeria as a whole resumed and that of secession seemed to be abandoned. The federal government, which had been getting little response to its search for arms and equipment from the West, turned to the Soviet Union whose response was prompt and decisive.

The attitude of the Soviet Union throughout the crisis was clear and consistent. In various messages, leading statesmen made it clear that the Soviet Union would not support any secessionist movement in Africa, since this was contrary to the interests of Africa and could not be of any benefit to the people. Britain and the other imperialists could not remain passive in the light of the Soviet initiative.

The federal government decided to blockade Port Harcourt and Calabar, the main ports for the export of oil. Britain had to climb off the fence.

The chief mystery at this point was to discover who was supporting Biafra with money and arms. It became obvious that Portugal was the supply point—a peculiar support for any African state in view of the anti-African policies of that country. Later, France emerged as the backer of Biafra. French interests were gambling on the break-up of Nigeria and the emergence of a grateful oil-owning Biafra which would then turn over the concessions to France. Fascist and anti-African Portugal had nothing to lose and everything to gain from African disintegration.

When the reverses of the federal government were halted by the battle of Ore, the inevitable tide against the secessionists began to tell. Eventually Biafra was reduced to a small area constituting the Ibo heartlands.

As with any civil war, this one has been and is tragic and bitter. All the people involved have lived together, worked together in

the same country, and had common aspirations. The bombings and killings, of what are in many cases close relatives, is terribly tragic. Nor is it a simple matter of apportioning blame on this or that group. None of the people in authority can escape a share of the blame for the factors which led to the civil war, whether it be the old politicians or the military. They have all helped to create the mess on both sides.

For purpose of determining a correct policy, it is not necessary to make a choice between the ruling groups on each side of the conflict. For progressives, especially, there is very little choice between Ojukwu's group or that around Gowon. The question is: in a given conflict where the issue is One Nigeria or secession at its core, should progressives take a stand in support of one or the other, or stand aside and hope that peace will soon return to Nigeria?

Some Matters of Principle

It has been argued in some quarters, that the Ibo in Biafra are asserting their right to self-determination and independence. Therefore, it is said, they have a right to secede and form their own state. On the facts, this argument received a shattering blow when the apparently victorious Ibos advanced toward Lagos and their offensive was halted at the battle of Ore. But an even more serious objection to this position arises from the fact that out of the twelve million people in the territory claimed by Ojukwu as Biafra, five million are not Ibo at all. On what principle could the five million non-Ibo people be included in the demand for secession based on the right of self-determination for the Ibo. The fact that oil also is situated in the territory of the non-Ibos increases the suspicion that self-determination is the last principle in the minds of the secessionists.

Marxist-Leninist theory provides us with a generally acceptable description of a nation. We avoid the use of the word "definition," which in the past suggested, and was used, to denote something rigid and dogmatic. We can say that a nation, generally speaking, denotes a historically-formed community, occupying a definite territory, speaking a common language and having a common economy, culture and traditions. Experience has shown that these elements do not always have to occur all together or even in that form, before it can be said that a community is a nation. Correctly viewed, the elements constituting a nation have to be considered dialectically and concretely in their connections and inter-connections with one another and with surrounding social phenoma, both internal and external.

Furthermore, the phenomenon must be viewed *from the point of view of the development of the world proletarian revolution*. We emphasize this because of the growth of the idealistic and non-proletarian notion of looking at issues allegedly "on their merits." Marxist-Leninists cannot use this notion as implying that issues can be analyzed separately from their influence on the further development of socialist positions in the world.

Central to the elements of a nation, which makes it possible to establish a scientific outlook on the problem, is the fact that the formation of nations has been connected with the victory over the feudal social formation by the capitalist class. Therefore, the capitalist system has gone hand-in-hand with the emergence of nations in the period before the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. The examples are numerous and include all the so-called old states of Great Britain, France, Japan, Italy, Germany. The rapid economic and industrial development of such countries can be traced to the fact that they began on the road of modern economy with the other elements of nationhood settled. In each case, they occupied a definite territory, spoke a common language, had a common culture, traditions and characteristics. Capitalism smashed the feudal fetters to complete national unity in the interests of the national market.

After 1917, the struggle of nations for freedom and independence becomes a component of the anti-imperialist and proletarian revolution. The process takes place in the epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism. There exists in our time a world socialist system, headed by the Soviet Union, which lies at the core of the revolutionary process. The camp of progress exerts influence on all world development.

The existence of the socialist world is a tremendous advantage for nations which desire to make progress along a genuinely independent path. Nation-building today need not be accompanied by the adoption of the painful capitalist path which led, especially in Europe, to national rivalries, boundary disputes, wars and, finally, to colonial conquests. The nations emerging today, in the period when the bourgeoisie has outlived its usefulness, can achieve their destiny under the banner of socialism. This is the only condition under which such nation-building can proceed voluntarily, without conflicts, wars and violence among Africans themselves.

Imperialism, on the other hand, is always ready to interfere with, retard and exploit the difficulties of nation-building for its own advantage. Tribal divisions, ethnic disputes, boundary and territorial

claims cannot be to the advantage of the common people of the world. They can only be grist to the mill of neo-colonialism and imperialism.

Finally, it should be made clear, that Marxist-Leninists do not support all national movements or all attempts of nations to secede or separate from a larger unit. The proletarian movement supports national movements of oppressed people and their right to secede from oppressor nations. And, in every case, the interests of the proletarian struggle as a whole takes precedence over the part.

The Position in Africa

The internal position in African states is a very complicated one. Not one of the African states is immune from the problems of ethnic and other divisions. The issue has not, as is sometimes thought, been ignored by African thinkers and politicians. At one time, elaborate plans were contemplated, providing for a more intelligent re-division of states in Africa so as to correct the imbalances created by imperialism in the nineteenth century. At the All-African People's Conference held in Accra in 1958, the issue was canvassed. At the first meeting of the Organization of African Unity, at which a dramatic incident occurred involving Somalia and Ethiopia, the issue was once again highlighted.

Every time the question of ethnic, tribal rights and boundaries are discussed, it is obvious that nothing but conflict and wars can result from the claims and counter-claims that immediately arise—all based on unanswerable "facts."

Kwame Nkrumah, the foremost champion of African unity, has said that the question can only be solved within the framework of a united Africa in which all boundaries would lose their significance. In the meantime, the stand taken by the OAU was that the former colonial boundaries should be legitimized unless states voluntarily altered them by agreement.

As it happens, Nigeria is one of the few entities in Africa that is large enough to form the basis of a modern industrial economy capable of standing on its own feet in the world. Many of the states in Africa are too small ever to constitute a viable entity for swift economic development. Whenever the imperialists could, they have been foremost in support of divisions, dismemberment and balkanization. France dismembered the Federation of West Africa and Equatorial Africa. Britain dismembered India. Nigeria was left with a regional set-up guaranteed to cause trouble. Of course, when it was

convenient for them, the imperialists put forward convincing arguments in favor of larger economic aggregations. Such arguments were used when the Union of South Africa and the Rhodesian Federation were created. But, in general, the story is one of fomenting communalism, tribalism and sectional interests.

It is not separation Africa needs, but greater unity. This is the case even where those seeking secession appear to be breaking away from a large entity governed by a reactionary ruling class. An example is that of Eritrea. This former Italian colony voted to become part of Ethiopia. Its leadership was progressive compared to the Ethiopian autocracy. Now a movement for liberation and secession from Ethiopia has been organized. The demand for the overthrow of the autocracy has numerous supporters all over Ethiopia. They have found the secessionist demand of the Eritreans, with whom they sympathize, very embarrassing. The demand for secession has strengthened the autocracy and weakened the general struggle for a new democratic and modern Ethiopia. The reply of the Eritreans has been that the demand is tactical, and not a matter of principle, since their war is with the autocracy and not with the people in Ethiopia. The result has been that the progressive movement is confused. The main people who benefit from this are the reactionary ruling circles.

The social system inside each country is another factor creating difficulties. In many cases the societies found by the imperialists were pre-feudal. These societies were then forcibly brought within the vortex of the capitalist exchange economy. The imperialists, however, often preserved many of the pre-feudal features as a device to maintain their rule. Nigeria, in particular, was the laboratory of the British imperialists. The emergence of a strong, indigenous capitalist class was stifled and the evolution of a common national culture retarded. Thus, independence was often achieved with the process of nation-building incomplete.

In many African states there is no common language. There are many languages, with the result that the foreign language has to be adopted as a *lingua franca*. For obvious reasons, the foreign language, whether it be French or English, is the possession of a small, educated elite. This imposes serious obstacles to the success of a mass literacy campaign. The emergence of a truly national and popular culture and literature becomes difficult.

There is absolutely no point to engage in the futile arguments as to whether the groups in each African country are a tribe, a nation, or

component parts of a still-developing nation. The real point is that there are problems of a divisive character which must be overcome by a positive program of unification.

Since independence, there has also been the rapid emergence of a compradore, bureaucratic bourgeoisie in many states, reminiscent in many ways of the mercantilist adventurers of the 16th- and 17th-century Europe. This compradore bourgeoisie is relatively weak in world terms. In relation to other classes inside a particular country, it may be very strong, especially because of its links with international imperialism. Because of its ideology and dependent character, this class more and more emerges as a non-national force and an obstacle to a genuine policy of united nationhood. Such a compradore bourgeoisie is always ready to be a willing tool of imperialist intrigues directed at creating secessions, dismemberment of African states, raising territorial demands, fanning racial passions and opposition to Pan-African cooperation. The latest of these intrigues is the fantastic claims of President Banda of Malawi for parts of Tanzania and Zambia on the grounds that the people living there are traditionally part of the same group as the Malawians. Everyone knows that the Republic of South Africa is connected with this move.

The Future of Nigeria

The Nigerian Socialist Workers and Farmers Party has taken a stand in favor of the preservation of Nigeria as a united entity. This is in the interests of the 55 million people of Nigeria and in the interests of Africa and world peace. This stand in the realm of active politics implies supporting the federal government in its efforts to end the secessionist attempt by Biafra. It does not imply support of individual reactionaries in the federal government or the ruling groups who stand behind it. These reactionary groupings support the idea of "One Nigeria" for quite different reasons. Hardly ten years ago the secessionists of today were the most vigorous advocates of "One Nigeria." The North, which was secessionist then, is now affirming that "to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done." But progressives have consistently supported a united Nigeria. The effects on Nigeria of the departure of the Ibos would be serious, especially for the progressive and working-class movement, which would lose some of its best contingents. In place of Nigeria there would emerge not only Biafra, but half a dozen more little countries.

All progressives desire to help Nigeria achieve its destiny of a united national democracy proceeding along the path to socialism.

This is the aspiration of the millions of workers and farmers as distinct from the warring ruling groups who have inflamed rivalries among the people.

Pan-African Unity

If Nigeria fails to maintain its unity, similar problems can emerge in a hundred-and-one different areas. Already, after the first Zambian general elections since independence, there is talk of the secession of the Barotseland Province inhabited by the Lozi. The irony is that Zambia is one of the countries that recognizes the secessionist Biafra regime. There can be no opportunism or tactical maneuvers over this important issue in Africa.

The position in Nigeria cannot be considered in isolation from the general progress of the African and world revolution to socialism. Many of the negative features applicable to the task of nation-building inside each country apply as well to the struggle for Pan-African unity. Progressives who fight for unity on the basis of national democratic and socialist policies are faced with the need to pick up the banner of Pan-African unity as well.

Since the removal of Kwame Nkrumah from power in Ghana, the voice of Pan-African unity has grown weaker although its organizational manifestations have grown in the Organization of African Unity which now numbers forty-one independent states. Trends within the OAU show that attempts are being made to transform the grand aspiration for a United Africa into an instrument of imperialist-supported reaction, which in the case of the Organization of American States has made this latter body unimportant. Progressives in Africa are determined that Pan-African unity will be the militant demand of the socialists. This was clearly stated by N. Numade ("Towards a United Africa," *African Communist*, No. 9, 1962) in the following words:

The achievement of a united Africa is inseparably bound up with the continuation and victory of the African revolution; the victorious struggles of the masses of the people against colonialism and its African agents; against reactionary forces and classes in Africa itself; for higher living and cultural standards and rapid economic development along non-capitalist lines; for eradication of imperialist economic domination in Africa; for agrarian revolution and industrial development; for democratic rights and national democracy; for a socialist Africa.

The "Impossible" Candidate*

When, in 1943, my candidacy for the New York City Council on the Communist ticket was announced, the press was unanimous in declaring my election impossible. For entirely different reasons, some of my friends joined them. The difficulties were considered insurmountable.

Shortly after I was designated as a candidate by the Manhattan County Committee of the Communist Party, I telephoned my father in Atlanta to inform him of my nomination. I had run for office before on the Communist ticket; consequently my father was not inclined to attach any special importance to this particular instance. But I assured him that this was different—this time I was going to win. An old hand in politics, too worldly-wise to be moved by youthful enthusiasm, he replied:

Son, this election is going to be like all the rest. Remember the time you ran for District Attorney or something on the Communist ticket? Well, you didn't get elected then; and you won't be elected this time. You Communists are always running for offices, but you never catch them. The day of your party hasn't come yet.

But the impossible happened. I was elected. The opposition and its two-party machine were shocked and dismayed. They had already had to swallow the bitter pill of the election of Peter V. Cacchione, Brooklyn Communist leader, in 1941, and they had hoped to get rid of him in 1943. Instead, they were now faced with two Communists in the city council.

My friends and supporters were jubilant. My election was another high-water mark in the achievement of the labor-Negro people's progressive coalition. Independent political action had scored a signal victory. And the Negro people of Harlem, demonstrating tremendous political maturity, had fired a shot that was heard not only in the sharecropper's cabin in Mississippi, but in the trenches in

* This is a chapter from *Communist Councilman from Harlem*, by Benjamin J. Davis written while imprisoned under the Smith Act. (International Publishers, 1969, Cloth \$6.95; Paperback \$2.85.)

Europe and the Far East. It was, above all, a victory for unity behind our country's patriotic, national war to defeat the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis.

The combination of circumstances and relationships which had led to this triumph had thrust upon me the honor of being the first Negro Communist elected to office in the history of the United States. While I regarded it as a great distinction and an unprecedented opportunity, uppermost in my mind was the feeling of responsibility. My task was not only to advance the movement which alone could improve the jim-crow conditions imposed upon my community in Harlem, but also to make the whole of New York City a better place for the people. There was no contradiction, but rather a dynamic unity, between the two.

A part of the campaign against me was that I would never get elected because I had two strikes against me. I was a Negro and a Communist. An amusing incident as to this "deadly" combination occurred when I called my father the night I was elected. He thought it was a gag and wouldn't believe me. I finally gave up—I knew how stubborn father could be, especially when he had predicted another outcome.

The next morning I got a call from him. Excited and happy, he exclaimed: "Son, I guess you were right. I see there's a headline in the paper here which says 'Black Red elected in New York. White Yankees vote for him.'"

My father represented a link between the period of the struggle for Negro rights in which he had lived and fought and another stage of this struggle in which I was living and fighting. He still was inclined to think his period would last forever, and still believed pretty much, as did Frederick Douglass, that "the Republican Party was the ship, and all else was the sea." He found it difficult to acknowledge the beginning of another era. Before he died, however, he had become somewhat reconciled to the inevitable; he even went so far as to completely forgive my abandonment 28 years earlier of the comfortable and lucrative bourgeois career he had arranged for me.

The reaction of the Atlanta paper was a small measure of the shock sustained by the bourgeoisie. The New York *Herald Tribune* sought to explain my election on the basis of my "personal following." Other papers and bourgeois experts on elections said it was a political accident.

Often in my campaign I would share with the audience the episodes

involving my father. They never failed to get a big laugh, especially when there were many Southern-born Negroes among the listeners. For they were intimately acquainted with the utterly absurd—as well as murderous—forms that white supremacy could take in the deep South. Sometimes I would use the description of me as a “Black Red” to answer the favorite argument of A. Philip Randolph, the Social-Democratic Negro labor leader: “Why should the Negro add to the handicap of being Black, the handicap of being Red?”

Far from considering it a handicap to be a Negro and a Communist simultaneously, I considered it a double weapon against the ruling class. An American Negro has a background of 300 years of oppression in this country, and great indeed is the Negro’s anger. When that same Negro is a Communist, he is equipped with a science—Marxism-Leninism—which alone can help realize his 300-year aspiration for freedom and equality.

In 1943, the only Negro member of the city council was Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who had been elected as the first Negro member in 1941. He had been elected pretty much as an independent, securing designations from the City Fusion Party, the American Labor Party and the Democratic Party. He was the symbol of the progressive people’s coalition in the city. This was the dramatic start of Powell’s political power as an independent, when he first proclaimed his motto: “I will wear no man’s collar.” He was swept into office in 1941 on the crest of a wave of demands by the Negro people and their supporters for representation in the city legislature. His election was made possible technically by Proportional Representation, which had become the law of the city under the new Charter adopted in 1936.

Powell was a powerful orator, dramatic and colorful, and capable of manipulating the emotions of his audience. A shrewd politician, he had the gift of sensing the popular yearnings and trends of the masses, which he voiced as their leader. His church, the Abyssinian Baptist, built by his father, was famous as the largest in the United States, numbering 15,000 members. A wealthy institution, its members were very politically and nationally alert, and constituted a formidable election machine.

As the chief executive functionary of the Harlem Communist Party, I had a deep concern in having the community retain the seat held in trust, as it were, by Councilman Powell. I had heard that he did not intend to run for re-election but, putting no stock in rumors, I decided to have a personal talk with him. We had a long discussion,

a friendly one, but not successful, on the question of the city council. He said, in effect, that he had already announced his candidacy for Congress in 1942. The new congressional district which made it possible to elect a Negro representative from Harlem had been carved out in 1941, and Powell was determined to be the first Negro congressman from that district.

I placed the issues squarely before him, giving the point of view of my party, namely, that it was incumbent upon the progressive forces of the community to do everything possible to guarantee the retention by a Negro of the seat he now held and, if at all possible, to elect an additional Negro. I emphasized that we were faced with the prospect of losing the one place in the council, and that would amount to a setback of such proportions as to damage the united struggles of the Negro people. I asked him to reconsider his decision not to run and, failing that, to assist in establishing unity around a progressive Negro candidate of independence and integrity who would be worthy of support.

Powell declined on both scores. He stated that to run for re-election to the city council in 1943 and then to make the race for Congress in 1944 was more than he could bear either physically or financially, and that he considered it best to relinquish his position in the council in order to prepare for the congressional race in 1944. On the second point, he preferred a hands-off policy.

This was late spring of 1943 and time was passing rapidly. It would be no easy or simple matter to achieve Harlem unity around a candidate who could win and there was not much time left. I had heard that Dr. Channing Tobias was considering the race and made an appointment with him at his offices in the YMCA headquarters on Madison Avenue. He was, of course, neither as militant nor as close to the man on the street as Powell, although he was pro-labor and had associated himself on various occasions with the progressive coalition. He would have made a good candidate at that time; he was part of the Roosevelt coalition among the Negro people in a vague sort of way. He was a typical liberal, but I was not looking for a Communist candidate but one around whom the broadest unity of the Negro people and labor could be achieved in this specific situation.

When I placed the question before him, he respectfully declined, on the ground that he wanted to remain independent politically and had no desire for public office.

I finally went to Dr. George Cannon, who later became the chair-

man of the non-partisan committee for my election. Although he declined to run, he helped in every way, calling conferences, having personal chats with friends, trying to convince representative Negroes to run.

George Cannon was an able physician and surgeon who had not lost any of his youthful passion against jim-crow. He would not sacrifice his militant views to further his medical career, and although he was a Roosevelt Democrat, he did not quail at my Communist convictions, but rather believed that if a cause was worthy, people should not permit political or other differences to prevent them from supporting it.

Nevertheless, the problem had not been solved. The nominations for the city council by all parties has been made, but no representative Negro from Harlem had been nominated. The Democrats had not nominated a Negro. Even the Negro Tammany leaders in the community were up in arms. They felt they had been put in a very bad position before the Negro people, upon whom they depended in the election district for the Democratic vote. Many of them protested and showed their disapproval but without going so far as breaking with the Tammany machine.

Our Harlem Communist Party surveyed the situation, consulted with Negro and labor leaders. My own conversations with various Negro spokesmen demonstrated that all felt that the place in the council must not be lost. They felt that the failure of the two major parties to designate a candidate of the community's choice should be exposed during the campaign. Our party had nominated a candidate, Carl Brodsky, well known in labor and progressive circles. He offered to withdraw in my favor and to permit the party to substitute my name for his as candidate on the Communist ticket. After due consideration, the county committee made the switch and my name was substituted for Brodsky's within the time permitted by the law. This decision was based upon the record of our Harlem party among the Negro people, their response to its program, and on the basis of our contact with the community. At least, I was an integral part of the people's coalition in Harlem, had shared in their struggles and activities, and had been accepted as one of their recognized spokesmen. Moreover, as my election proved, our party had correctly judged the desires and sentiment of the Negro people and their white supporters as well.

The honor of my designation as the Communist candidate belonged rightfully not to me but to the people from whom I sprang. What-

ever spark of determination I possessed in the struggle was instilled in me by the hardihood of my people in resisting oppression in America, Africa, the West Indies and wherever black men fight to live. I had seen that same flame burn in my father; a little of it burns in every Negro, if he does not permit it to be extinguished by violence or intimidation, or if he does not deny it for a mess of pottage.

Carl Brodsky was truly a representative of the Jewish people. In withdrawing in my favor, under circumstances in which the Jewish people needed a representative in the City Council, he demonstrated the close bonds of cooperation that could exist between the Jewish and Negro people. His action was a warm, human and generous symbol of recognition on the part of progressive Jewish workers of their own profound stake in the cause of Negro liberation.

It was not only I who was deeply impressed; the dramatic and genuine demonstration of solidarity was not lost among the people of Harlem. Although Brodsky spent most of his time during the campaign trying to win the lower East Side Jewish workers to my support, he would occasionally come to Harlem, often speaking on the same platform with me. He would receive a rousing ovation from the people.

The tremendous vote I received from the Jewish community was one of the highlights of my election. I was told by experienced election campaigners that my name had become as familiar as one of their own, and that never before had a Negro candidate received such a high percentage of votes in a white neighborhood.

The metropolitan newspapers merely noted the fact that I had been substituted for Carl Brodsky. I was listed along with the candidates of the other parties. After this, there ensued a conspiracy of silence in these papers; the bourgeois election experts and commentators paid me no mind. I didn't have a chance, according to them, so why waste printer's ink? Tammany paid no serious attention to my candidacy; nor did the Republicans. This attitude even affected the people in my own ranks. Many friends said, "Yes, you'll make a good campaign, a very fine one indeed; but you won't be elected—too many odds against you. Besides, the two party machines are too strong; if you look as though you might become a serious threat, they'll pour in thousands of dollars to defeat you," and so on, ad infinitum.

These friends and supports were not the only ones with serious doubts. Some of my own comrades were skeptical. They were only a small minority among the party membership, still their views de-

served serious consideration. They doubted that the estimate of a possible victory was correct, although during the campaign they worked with great skill and energy; I would have liked to have had more "skeptics" like them. Such differences illustrate a cardinal distinction of our party—a working class organization operating on the principle of democratic centralism. Once a decision was made it was binding and carried out by all members alike. Some of these skeptics pointed out that a Communist councilmanic candidate in Manhattan had never received more than 13,000 votes, and in Harlem no more than 5,000 votes. They estimated that I would have to receive almost twice the number of votes in the trade union and progressive white areas that a Communist candidate had ever received in the whole of Manhattan under the best circumstances. Furthermore, the campaign was late and I had only a bare six weeks. Other arguments were that any attempt to shoot for victory would tax our organization too heavily and run the danger of not securing the reelection of Councilman Cacchione in Brooklyn. Still others held that I should aim to secure enough second-choice votes to elect the ALP candidate, which would be a big advance since Manhattan had never had a labor councilman.

These arguments could not be brushed aside willy-nilly. They proved to be very valuable in pitching and focusing the campaign and in touching up weak points. Besides, these exchanges of opinion were part of the thorough way in which our party considered all angles of a problem and then charted its course. It was this same Marxist consideration of many-sided factors that led to the election victory and rallied and strengthened our ranks.

All the doubts expressed by the skeptics failed to dent my enthusiasm. My campaign staff and I prepared to involve all these friends, not in a "very fine" campaign, but in a winning one. I was buoyed up by the fact of Pete Cacchione's election in 1941. What was basically new in the situation was the tremendous upsurge among the Negro masses and the unprecedented support they were receiving from white workers—particularly from the CIO, but also from the AFL—as well as from white intellectuals, artists, progressives, liberals. The Negro people, whole-heartedly supporting the war against fascist-racism abroad, were demanding more and more earnest of eventual victory at home. Their democratic aspirations were released under the impetus of the anti-fascist war. The war, under Roosevelt's leadership, brought forward the most democratic and progressive traditions of our country. What was apparent here was

the possibility of a qualitative leap forward for the Negro people and for independent political action. It had to be grasped then or it would be lost.

The circumstances that had dictated my nomination also shaped my campaign, which was pitched upon the theme of winning the war and demonstrating against Hitler racism by advancing the cause of Negro representation at home. In the local and city program were: the banning of jim-crow in Stuyvesant Town, the appointment of a Negro on the Board of Education, a public market for Harlem, the end of police brutality, rent and price controls, slum clearance, the enforcement and expansion of the multiple dwelling laws, and the outlawing of all forms of racial discrimination, anti-Semitism, jim-crow and segregation.

But I was also running on the Communist ticket. It was my duty and responsibility, as well as my privilege, to explain to the voters why I was running on that ticket, what the Communist Party stood for and why I was a member. If I couldn't trust the people, why should they trust me? I did not believe in hiding "the light of Marxism-Leninism" under a bushel. It was necessary to point out that though I had backers of other parties in my corner, I nevertheless was a Communist whose program went much farther than the present election campaign; that I believe in socialism and would ever strive for its triumph at home.

My campaign spread like wildfire. Overnight the nonpartisan committee for my election leaped from about 50 to approximately 2,000—a real cross-section of ministers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, trade unionists, social leaders, women, youth, foreign-born, native-born, workers, artists—indeed, people from every conceivable stratum of life. The committee became so large and unwieldy that it had to divide up into smaller committees. The major power in these committees and among the campaign workers were the Negro masses and the trade unionists. The accomplishments of our party, which numbered less than 2,000, were nothing short of miraculous. Only hard work, devotion and skill—climbing six and seven flights of stairs, tramping the streets in the roughest weather, seeing ministers, arranging conferences, holding street meetings, distributing literature, and so on—could achieve such "miracles."

Resolutions of endorsement and support soon began to pour in from unions, churches, groups of almost every description. Friends in the deep South, especially from Atlanta, sent long public statements of good wishes, accompanied by donations. Soldiers in the

trenches sent best wishes. The campaign took on an international aspect. The two Harlem Negro weeklies reflected in as much space as they dared to give the snowballing character of the campaign.

A group of artists and layout experts produced excellent campaign literature. An enterprising chap even got hold of an old Amherst yearbook of my class (1925)—from an unsuspecting Wall Street classmate—and reproduced my entire college career in pictures. My campaign literature was of “printer’s excellence”; even experienced Democrats and Republicans wanted to know whether they could borrow my layout staff—“for a price,” of course. They were amazed to find that not everyone was for sale. Many of the people of Harlem wanted certain campaign pieces as ornaments for their walls.

We held street rallies at the liveliest corners in Harlem, in the garment workers’ district, before union and people’s organizations in the course of their regular meetings. It was impressive to see the revolutionary tradition of the Negro church assert itself during the campaign. They became bulwarks of support to my campaign. Ministers invited me to speak “for a few minutes” at their 11 o’clock Sunday morning religious services.

The campaign was becoming irresistible; the smell of victory was in the air. Councilman Powell was now ready to take his stand. He issued a statement declaring that I was the “worthy successor” to his seat in the city council, and called upon his supporters and friends to vote for me. Accurately gauging the enthusiasm of the campaign, the Non-Partisan Committee decided on a rally in Golden Gate Ballroom—a mammoth auditorium in the center of Harlem, holding about 5,000 people.

A top price of \$2.75 was placed on reserved seats and 50¢ on general admission. “Who ever heard of charging for admission to an election rally?” the doubting Thomases said. “Most candidates are only too glad to get a full house, with free admission.” But the committee wouldn’t be daunted.

There was scarcely a name band or a popular entertainer who did not volunteer their services. The Golden Gate was sold out ten days before the rally. On the day of the event, the fire department closed the hall two hours before the performance. When I appeared on the scene, it was all I could do to get in. One of the more prominent artists had to intercede with the police and fire department in my behalf.

Finally another 5,000 people had gathered outside the Golden Gate. We decided to rent an additional hall about six blocks away. We

then routed the artists to this hall after their Golden Gate performance.

There were no speeches. Paul Robeson introduced me at both halls. I told the audience that I was but a part in a cause much bigger than any one of us and that we would struggle jointly until our country and the world were rid of Hitler racism and all human-kind could live in dignity and walk in freedom.

This type of campaign rally was new, and we continued with it. At our street corner rallies we featured outstanding Negro and white artists. They performed with dignity, and they gave their talent because of their convictions.

In Harlem, support came from all sorts of quarters and for all sorts of reasons. A score or more old-timers who were Georgia-born supported me because they knew and admired my father. Some of them would slap me on the back and say: “Davis, your father was a Lincoln Republican. You must be a Lincoln Communist. I’m going to vote for you.”

The large vote I received from the Puerto Rican community was indispensable to my victory. During the campaign two things struck me with great force: First, that the Puerto Rican community in lower Harlem, victimized by discrimination, had no representation whatever at any level of government;* second, that I could not speak Spanish. I resolved to do something to help correct both these conditions.

In the course of the five-week whirlwind campaign, the Communist Party had built a smooth and powerful people’s election machine they cut across all party lines. It was based on the crusading spirit of the advanced trade unionists—the leaders of the working class. They had ties with thousands of families, churches and people’s organizations in Harlem and throughout the city. When they moved in their full strength, the whole community moved. Naturally, our heaviest concentration was in Harlem, for without a large base vote in Harlem, it was not possible to win.

When election day came, the trade unionists took over all our poll-watching assignments—most outstanding were the organized seamen, the furriers (CIO) and the food workers (AFL). Church women prepared hot coffee and sandwiches at various assembly spots on

*The so-called racial pattern of the United States must appear quite bewildering to the Puerto Rican people. In New York they are jim-crowed and treated like Negroes. But here in Terre Haute federal penitentiary they are integrated with the white inmates, while the Negro is segregated. It shows the utter insanity of racism and discrimination.

election day. Many elderly Negroes voted for the first time in their lives. As a candidate, I had the right to visit the polls—and I did. Whenever I walked in, there were cheers and assurances of victory. The heaviest voting in New York City is done in the last two hours—between 5 and 7 P.M., the period when the workers are returning from their jobs. At about 4:30 P.M. the worst downpour of the season started. It lasted until about 8 P.M., an hour beyond the closing of the polls. All we could do was hope. I continued to visit the polls even during the downpour and was surprised to see that the polling places were crowded. We took heart from this.

When the polls closed, our task had just begun. The count began next morning and was to last about eight days. These days seemed like years. To watch the count is a bewildering, nerve-wracking experience. One had to be on his toes against vote stealing, chicanery, every conceivable brand of trickery—as well as some honest errors. The Democrats and Republicans held all the official positions as counters, tellers, etc., and they did not want me to win. And it later appeared that they planned to count me out.

From the first day of the count, I was leading the field. Radio commentators blasted out that this was the upset of the election. Actually, they were counting those districts which included Harlem. But after the first two or three days, my vote began to level off as the count reached other parts of the city. I remained among the first three, however, and five were to be elected. It seemed that my election was assured. But then the stealing began in earnest. The votes for me began to disappear from my table, and the closest Tammany candidates began to congregate around my table, seeking to create an incident. We appealed to Mayor La Guardia, to the Honest Ballot Association, to every clean-government group. Statements were issued informing the public of the conspiracy to count me out.

On the fourth day Pete Cacchione, his own election in Brooklyn now assured, brought his entire staff over to the Manhattan court to assist me. Soon after he arrived, I discovered that some of my Harlem districts were missing and hadn't been counted. One of the ablest of our party election workers demanded a halt to the count, and demanded the right to search for the missing votes. He dug through the huge pile, district by district, and found not only the missing votes he knew of but also some unknown ones. In all, 1,500 votes had been stacked away, stolen right before our eyes. How perilous this was could be seen in the fact that I won by a little over 2,000 votes. It was a dramatic moment.

When, at the end of the long, gruelling count, my election was announced, every Negro in the Armory jumped up and yelled. They were to maintain their representation in the city council and white supremacy had taken a licking. The machine had been beaten. The wrath of an aroused electorate outweighed the fraud, deceit, corruption and vote-stealing of the party bosses. The unity of Negro and white had done the "impossible." History had been made.

Major party lines had been badly shattered. In the whole of Manhattan in 1943, there were not more than 6,000 Communists. My vote was more than 43,000. My election represented a qualitative leap forward for the Negro people, for the Negro-labor alliance and for our party. It was the result of years of conscientious and consistent work of the party in Harlem in the battles of the Negro people. And it went far beyond the state lines of New York, reflecting the leading role that Harlem plays in the political thinking of the Negro, nationally. From all over the country came messages of congratulations, greetings, best wishes. And I felt a sense of responsibility to the Negro people, nationally, and to fighters for Negro and colonial liberation all over the globe.

* * *

In this campaign for the city council, as well as in my subsequent campaigns in 1945 and 1947, the dominant note was its people's character. By this I mean that my platform which was based upon the major issues facing the electorate was shaped in such a manner as to facilitate the coming together of the largest sector of the people in defense and extension of their all-round welfare. Republican and Democratic voters rallied to my support no less than independents. It was the difference between a narrow partisan campaign designed to reach primarily those who agreed with my Marxist socialist views, and a people's nonpartisan campaign designed to reach those who could unite on immediate issues such as housing, equality, police violence and civil liberties, irrespective of their party affiliation or long-range political perspective. The latter was especially adapted to Harlem, characterized by the all-people's character of the movement against the jim-crow ghetto system.

However, there was no contradiction between my being a Communist candidate and at the same time a people's candidate. The two supplemented each other. Moreover, only such an approach could guarantee Negro representation on the city council. Besides, living Marxism is itself the broadest approach to the mass of people, encompassing all who work by hand and brain. Since my party was

part of the people's movement in its electoral coalition form, I could pledge the support of the Communists to this broad people's platform. Some of my well-meaning supporters who were either Democrats or Republicans hoped I would stop there and go no further, fearing that an espousal of my views would frighten away voters. I rejected this view. Some agreed, others tried to reconcile themselves with my position; but none bolted. My campaigns were an excellent example of the united or people's front in which many forces work together on a common platform, even though they disagree on many other important questions.

At the same time, the foundation of my victorious campaign was the alliance of the Negro people and important sections of the labor movement. Upon this foundation was erected the structure of mass support among all sections of the population. The solid vote of Harlem was not enough to elect me; I needed the trade union and white progressive vote. That was shown clearly after the ALP candidate was counted out, when I received enough second-choice votes from him to assure my election by a comfortable margin.

It was significantly shown in the elections that among the Negro people there was a tremendous trend toward independent political action, toward breaking with the two-party system. They also showed great solidarity and a high degree of political maturity. Cacchione's vote was scattered widely over the Borough of Brooklyn, while my base vote was largely in a single community, which rebuffed solidly any red-baiting during the campaign.

Although our party received such a fine reception in Harlem it failed to become a mass party in that community. The basic requisites were present, except for one: the will to do so. As the leader of the party in Harlem, I was making one of the biggest mistakes in my political life. For I had become, no less than many other party leaders, deeply influenced by the revisionism of Browder, which led to the liquidation of the party as an independent working class force. Our party began to merge with the masses of militants and progressives, losing its own identity. True, the party had played a significant role by drawing together and leading the combination of forces that achieved my election and made possible continued Negro representation on the city council at a crucial moment when all other parties failed to meet the test. All the more pity that we failed to build a strong, mass party in Harlem.

Our campaign did make clear certain important characteristics of our party. My candidacy did not result from a careerist desire to

run for office, as is generally the case with other parties. It was a response to the needs of the given situation—to guarantee that the Negro people should not lose their place on the city council. My nomination came only after the party had offered its full support to other candidates, none of whom were Communists but who merited the support of the Negro people and had a good chance of winning. In fact, it had not occurred to me that I might be the candidate.

The campaign also showed that only a progressive Negro candidate could serve as the symbol of unity. A conservative Negro spokesman identified with either of the major parties could not have united the Negro people. Such a candidate would have led to disunity, to certain defeat and to the loss of the council seat. The ruling class can unite only on a reactionary program, the working class only on a progressive one.

Thus, now the so-called unity of the CIO and AFL behind the pro-imperialist policies of the top labor leadership is a false facade. Basically confused and temporarily hogtied by the collaborationist policies of the officialdom, predominant sections of the labor movement are following the line of least resistance behind their treacherous leadership, although a significant section opposes these policies. On the other hand, a positive policy, clearly put before the rank and file and courageously fought for, together with further experiences in struggle, can eventually turn the tide. So much the better for America. Let us hope that this will happen in time—in time to avert the third world war and the catastrophe into which the ruling class, abetted by the top labor officialdom, is pushing the nation.

My electoral victory rested upon years of conscientious and consistent work of the Communist Party in Harlem in the struggles of the Negro people. Many gave their lives or served in prison, victims of police brutality, frame-ups or what have you. Progress seems slow and then, all at once, when conditions are ready, it takes a big leap forward. Communist open-air speakers were pelted with cabbages and tomatoes by Garveyites back in 1929, but a dozen years later even the neo-Garveyites joined in my campaign. It is always toward the qualitative leap forward that the Communist works, for it is only in this way that socialism can be established. There is no such thing as capitalism gradually growing into socialism. But the Communist also works, even at the risk of his life, to prevent a qualitative step backward. For this can mean only one thing—fascism, which in our country might well be worse than Hitlerism.

The Anti-Imperialist Struggle In Argentina*

The struggle of the working class of the country and of all democratic sections of the population against the military dictatorship installed after the coup of June 28, 1966, is gaining momentum. The coup, it will be recalled, was masterminded by fascist-like Army generals subservient to the Pentagon, who had the full backing of the latifundist oligarchy and big capitalists not to mention the head of the Catholic church and other clerical dignitaries.

In his report to the Seventh National Conference of the Communist Party, Victorio Codovilla, Chairman of the Party, described the situation as follows:

At the time of the coup the objective conditions had matured in the country for effecting deep-going changes in its socio-economic structure, and also in its political super-structure, towards an agrarian, democratic and anti-imperialist revolution. Also the subjective conditions were maturing which would have made these changes possible: the struggle of the workers and of the masses was mounting, there was a broader united action by the working class and all democratic sections pressing for profound changes in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the country.

The success of the coup in these conditions, followed by the establishment of a dictatorship headed by General Onganía, was due, on the one hand, to the fact that Dr. Illia's government of the Civil Radical Union, instead of relying on the support of the workers and the popular masses, and taking measures against the putschists, yielded to the pressure of the latter, and, on the other, to the support given by the Peronist and "Independent" leaders of the CGT (General Confederation of Labor) and by Peron himself.

Shortly before the coup, on May 1, 1966, the CGT leaders, under mass pressure and on the insistence of the Communists and the Movement for Trade Union Unity and Coordination (MUCS), had signed a program-document aimed at promoting united working-class action. The CGT leadership was reorganized accordingly to include Peron-

* Reprinted from the *World Marxist Review*, October-November, 1968.

ists, "Independents" and Communists. Uniting most of the working people, this organization was on the way to becoming a real center coordinating the mass struggle and anti-imperialist actions. Its leaders, however—with the exception of Communist and some other officials—had meanwhile been busy contacting the military, the architects of the coup, and subsequently supported it.

As for the leaders of the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political parties, they adopted a wait-and-see attitude, preferring not to come out openly against the military dictatorship.

The Communist Party found itself isolated, the masses in a state of confusion because of the Peronist leaders' policy. In these conditions the Party decided not to expose its vanguard, not to throw it alone into battle, but to intensify its work among the people, explaining the character of the coup and the military dictatorship set up as a result. This dictatorship, the Party explained, would pursue a reactionary anti-labor policy, a policy in the interests of the oligarchy and imperialism; the Party called on the people to prevent, through unity and struggle, consolidation of the dictatorship. It outlined its attitude in a statement published 24 hours after the coup.

The Fight Against the Pro-American Dictatorship

Although the Onganía dictatorship chose to keep quiet about its program and its intentions, the facts soon spoke for themselves. Complying with the demand of the Big Banks, the dictatorship immediately took measures against the cooperatives, which embrace more than a million small manufacturers, merchants and farmers. It interfered in university affairs with a view, naturally, to curbing the democratic activities of faculty members and students, who, for instance, had condemned the imperialist aggression in the Dominican Republic and in Vietnam. The political parties were dissolved and their property confiscated. A similar fate befell many other democratic and patriotic organizations. The land-rent law, which ensured the tenant farmer a certain stability, was repealed.

Onganía lost no time mounting an offensive against the working class. Charges for municipal services were raised and the peso was devalued. Coupled with other factors, this sent up the cost of living. Wages were frozen and the laws governing the social rights won by the workers annulled. Those of the trade unions which took a stand against the dictatorship became the target of the authorities. Labor conditions in the docks were revised to the disadvantage of the dock-

ers, and the protest strike sparked by these measures was brutally suppressed.

In Tucuman province the government closed down 10 sugar refineries, leaving 50,000 workers without a livelihood and the peasants cultivating sugar cane without a market. The people replied with widespread strikes and a movement to protect the province's economy.

In these conditions the Communists called upon the working class, peasantry and other working people, and also on a large part of the national bourgeoisie, to unite against the dictatorship. Playing for time Ongania dismissed Army commander Lieutenant-General Pistarini who, together with the Navy and Air Force commanders, had led the coup. He also dismissed the Minister of the Economy and other top officials. Meanwhile, however, he continued his policy of helping U.S. monopolies to colonize the country. He sought to protect the monopolies and the landed oligarchy and the big capitalists from the consequences of the deepening structural crisis, and this, of course, at the expense of the working class, peasantry, small and middle bourgeoisie. In a speech made on November 7, 1966, Ongania said: "We Argentiniains have not been living according to our means," adding: "Our policy henceforth will be to export everything possible and consume just what remains."

On March 13, 1967, the New Minister of the Economy, Vasena, and the President of the Central Bank sent a letter to the International Monetary Fund informing it of labor retrenchments in the state sector, where wage increases would not exceed 15 per cent (while the increase in the cost of living was much higher), of increased charges for municipal services and transport rates (train fares went up 66 per cent). The state-owned enterprises would be turned over to the private sector. The letter also mentioned that a new law would be enacted allowing for private investment in the oil industry, and announced that the government had reduced the import tax from the maximum 325 per cent to 140 per cent. Ongania noted that the economic recovery plan would entail sacrifices on the part of the poorer sections of the population. In short, the military dictatorship gave the imperialist monopolies, and the U.S. monopolies in the first place, full control over the country's economy.

The pressure of the masses, led by the Communist Party, compelled the CGT leaders, who in the early phases had supported the military dictatorship, to change their attitude. A 24-hour general strike was called in December, 1966, to protest the government's social, political and economic measures and to demand the settlement of various

labor issues. The strike of four million was joined by students and small traders.

It was also mass pressure that compelled the CGT leaders to support a number of actions in February, 1967, against the dictatorship's policy; these culminated in a 48-hour general strike at the beginning of March. However, the strike was betrayed by the majority of the Peronist and "Independent" CGT leaders who ordered the strikers back to work and declared for a "dialogue" with the dictatorship. The government, represented by the Secretary of Labor, initiated talks with these leaders and secured their collaboration.

Although the masses were disoriented and stunned by this treachery, they soon took up the struggle again. At the CGT congress convened last March the government supporters were defeated by the joint actions of the Communist delegates and those of the Peronists and "Independents" opposed to collaboration with the government. The defeated CGT leaders thereupon began, with the blessing of the dictatorship, devious activities and formed a new trade union center.

Although opposed to the government, the new CGT leadership is a timid leadership as evidenced by the removal from office of Communists and the expulsion of the unions affiliated to the MUCS. For their part the Communists, while they give the present CGT leadership the necessary backing, are nevertheless critical of it and seek to influence it through mass pressure. Despite the government ban, the CGT, supported by all democratic sections, sponsored May Day meetings throughout the country.

Mass Struggles Leading Toward Anti-Imperialist Front

On June 15, big demonstrations were held all over the country to mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the movement for university reform, again despite a government ban and the attempts of some leaders of the University Federation to turn them into sectarian gatherings.

On June 28, the second anniversary of the coup, the fight against the military dictatorship flared up with renewed force. The CGT, student and other democratic organizations and various political parties, including the Communist Party, urged holding demonstrations and sent out a joint call. In Cordoba the demonstration was led, among others, by Dr. Illia, the lawful President of the Republic ousted by the coup, and by Ongaro, General Secretary of the CGT. Numerous anti-government movements are under way in the country. Small and middle merchants and manufacturers, supported by other groups

of the population, have launched a campaign protesting against the annulment of the law against evictions.

Secondary school pupils and university students are also protesting against the government's measures. Organizations representing 50,000 peasants have started a movement for agrarian reform and other demands.

Catholics are participating in most of these campaigns. Priests have been arrested, and some who are not Argentinian subjects, have been deported.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party, Communists held big demonstrations which came under attack from the police. Together with the Communist Youth Federation, the Party also sponsored many actions in solidarity with the people of Vietnam, such as fund collections, the publication of appeals carrying hundreds of signatures, rallies in support of Vietnam, and so on. To promote this solidarity an Aid Vietnam Movement was launched. It helped mount a wide protest campaign when a group of top Army officers was sent to Vietnam, when Argentinian wheat was shipped to the South Vietnam puppet government, and when it was rumored that troops would be dispatched there. Delegations of soldiers' mothers visited the barracks where they handed their protests to the officers.

The Movement for the Protection of the National Wealth, organized by a group of public personalities, plans to hold a congress in defense of the national economy and the natural resources which the dictatorship is handing over to the imperialists. Active in this movement are one-time government ministers and MPs from different political parties, retired officers, trade union leaders, scholars, among them the economist Jaime Fuchs, a Communist, and other personalities. Mention should also be made of the movements in defense of civil liberties. Many people in the judiciary are opposed to enactment of an anti-Communist "law" whereby persons engaging in Communist propaganda can be sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, and to other measures of the dictatorship. Bar associations throughout the country protested the government's interference in the affairs of the judiciary in the province of Sante Fe when the latter defended the right of students to demonstrate.

Strikes are a daily occurrence. In many cases the workers occupy the factories and resist the attempts of the police to interfere.

Hundreds of families in Buenos Aires and elsewhere live in shanty towns. The authorities are trying to evict the residents but are meeting

with resistance.

The General Economic Confederation, which includes leading organizations of manufacturers comes out strongly against the dictatorship. The Rolled Metal Association, for example, has declared that the policy imposed on the state-owned SOMISA iron and steel plant is prejudicial to the national interest and can only benefit foreign capital. As a result of this policy the enterprise has now been made dependent on U.S. capital.

The facts confirm that the Communist Party acted correctly in June, 1966, when it decided not to throw its vanguard into battle against the dictatorship. This Leninist position enabled the Party to regroup broad sections of the population and direct them in a struggle which in the present conditions is more and more closely related to the problem of the conquest of power. The Communist Party is working for labor unity and, more particularly, for a broad front of struggle against the dictatorship, and for the fundamental changes sorely needed by the country and which ever broader sections of the population are demanding. We have in mind an anti-imperialist, democratic and anti-latifundia front, a front of struggle for peace which would unite diverse forces, ranging from the working class to the national bourgeoisie. This front would make it possible to end the dictatorship and form a broad democratic coalition government which would include also the Communist Party and democratic-minded patriotic military.

This coalition could resolve the urgent problems of the day and convene a constituent assembly based on proportional representation, that is to say that every party or group would be represented in accordance with its weight in society. The constituent assembly would begin to effect the fundamental changes needed in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the country. The Communists would participate in such a government with their program for agrarian reform, expropriation of monopoly-owned enterprises, etc. Basing themselves on this program, the Communists would support a constitution under which a one-chamber parliament as the principal organ of administration would appoint the President, the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Court. A multi-party system would be envisaged.

The Communist Party is preparing for all conditions of struggle—for those which will not necessitate insurrection and those that might call for armed action. The Party realizes that this will depend on the concrete conditions, that in Argentina it is a question of mass

action or gamble, and not of armed or unarmed struggle. The Party is guided by the slogan advanced by its Twelfth Congress: "Through mass action to conquest of power."

The Communist Party is winning support thanks to its decisive role in the struggle, to its propaganda and political education of the working people. It is working to free the masses from the paralyzing influence of bourgeois nationalism, expressed mainly in the ideology of Peronism. Bourgeois nationalism acts from Right positions, but even more so from those of the ultra-Left groups which direct their fire against the Communist Party, against the Soviet Union, and which try to oppose the so-called third world to the socialist camp.

Peron quotes Mao Tse-tung and others to hamper fraternal unity and joint actions by Peronist and Communist workers. In his book *Latin America Now or Never*, Peron writes: "To the calamities befalling Argentina there is now added another and no less dangerous one—Communism." In another place he writes: "In the first half of September 1964 a new stage in our history apparently began: the great Mao let the Soviet Union know that People's China will not participate in the meeting called in Moscow, since it does not share the view that socialism should help support Soviet imperialism. . . ." He goes on: "Various ideologies have been overcome and the dilemma: Communism or capitalism, no longer exists. It has now been replaced by another dilemma: national liberation or neo-colonialism."

Failure of the Pro-American Dictatorship

The Communist Party has achieved the aim set forth in its document of June 29, 1966, namely to prevent consolidation of the pro-imperialist dictatorship. *The dictatorship has failed in its attempt to crush the labor and other movements.* Commenting on the demonstration of the Ika-Renault automobile workers in Cordoba, *Analisis*, a leading bourgeois journal, wrote on June 17: "On Friday, June 7, millions of TV viewers saw for themselves how the national peace, extolled by the President in a speech only the day before, was shattered. They saw the bitter clashes that took place on June 5 in Cordoba between the Ika-Renault workers and students, on the one hand, and the police on the other. . . ." The workers, supported by students, were demanding that the wholesale dismissals be stopped. After this, the Ongania government clamped down on the radio and TV.

The Communist Party is calling for the establishment of a center to coordinate the fight of the workers and the people generally, in which the General Confederation of Labor would play the leading

role. Unlike the former CGT leaders who opposed this, the present leadership stated in their May Day message:

The CGT calls on all sections of the population (excluding the corrupt leaders and the minority that has adopted a defeatist attitude), to rally in all parts of the country for a frontal blow at imperialism and the monopolies, and to combat hunger.

The idea of anti-imperialist, anti-oligarchy and democratic unity, which the Communist Party has always upheld, is winning more and more support among the people, and also among bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. The leadership of the Civil Radical Union—the ruling party before the coup—stated in this connection:

The conditions essential for unity exist, and all that is needed is to stimulate the trends favoring the holding of a unity meeting. . . . The time has come to realize this and stop playing at division.

A leading Peronist group has advanced a program containing the following aims: 1) struggle against the dictatorship; 2) unity and organization of all sections of the people so as to form a civil resistance center against the dictatorship and government measures prejudicial to national sovereignty and the interests of the people; 3) the working class to head this struggle to ensure the people's advent to power.

On May 6, 1968, the Social-Democratic Party stated: "The different parties should try to bring their positions into line in the search for a democratic and just solution of the problems."

Although the dictatorship proclaimed the dissolution of all political parties the latter are continuing to function clandestinely, and our Party's slogans of unity are meeting with increasing recognition. As a result, some parties have been compelled to stop making anti-Communist statements. It is now a question of passing from declarations about unity to practical steps to organize a broad united front. The Right forces in the various parties and people's organizations are, of course, maneuvering in every possible way to prevent unity.

The Dictatorship's Economic Fiasco

The yes-men of the dictatorship had hoped that complete subordination to the imperialists, and the U.S. imperialists in the first place, would ensure them wide support and economic aid. However, the imperialist monopolies are themselves trying to get Argentina to shoulder part of their difficulties.

The dictatorship counted on increasing exports at the expense of

the home market. However, industry and not agriculture and stock-raising accounts for the greater share in the gross national income. Nearly 75 per cent of the population live in cities. Thirty per cent of the cash value of farm produce is accounted for by sugar cane, cotton, grapes, Paraguay tea, rice and other crops which go mainly to the home market. The export of grains, oil bearing crops and animal produce bring in approximately 95 per cent of the currency needed to finance imports, to pay for the loans and interest on them and to pay for patents, licenses and technical documentation. The interests of part of the latifundist oligarchy and monopolies are essentially connected with exports. Even so, the dictatorship has not been able to find a bigger market for Argentinian goods; if anything, its markets are shrinking.

In 1967, the cash value of Argentinian exports in dollars decreased by 8.1 per cent. In the first five months of this year it decreased by another 17.7 per cent compared with the same period last year. This was due to a fall in prices for exports, but even more so to the deterioration in the economic and financial position of the goods. The Common Market countries, which take approximately 40 per cent of Argentina's exports, are resorting to more restrictive measures.

The United States, which has the strongest foothold in Argentina, sells it much more than it imports, and this, naturally, most adversely affects the country's trade balance. What is more, U.S. agricultural products compete with Argentinian products on many markets, the U.S. even resorting to dumping in some cases.

Things are going from bad to worse, despite the appeals of the dictatorship to help remedy matters. At a banquet last July, at the Argentino-American Chamber of Commerce, Krieger Vasena, Minister of the Economy said:

Our favorable trade balance with the countries of Western Europe averaged \$500 million annually (for the three years 1965-67), while the deficit in trade with the United States and Canada totalled approximately \$170,000 annually. For the same period our trade with the countries of the East showed a favorable trade balance of approximately \$100,000 annually.

The capitalist countries of Europe make it a condition that Argentina should buy more goods from them if it wants to increase its exports. This often leads to measures prejudicial to the country's industry, as was the case when a number of merchant ships were built in European shipyards while those of the Argentine remained idle.

As earlier noted, the dictatorship reckoned, that by pursuing a policy of subordination to imperialism, it would receive big loans and investments. However, the loans were very small and, in many cases, merely a renewal of old ones. As for investments, the U.S. monopolists are using part of their own profits which they are reinvesting, or drawing on Argentina's own accumulations, particularly now with the devaluation of sterling, the peseta and other currencies, and the difficulties experienced by the dollar. All this has told on Argentina's currency reserves which consist, in large part, of dollars and sterling, not gold. Matters are complicated by the fact that part of these reserves are abroad.

Much of Argentina's private capital is in the USA and other imperialist countries. The present Argentinian ambassador to the United States recently told journalists: "Deposits made by Argentina in 1967 in U.S. banks are contributing, true, on a modest scale, to improving America's payments balance." So are the profits and loan payments siphoned out of the country, not to speak of the brain drain to the United States.

To be able to compete on the world market Argentina has had to cut production costs. The last ten years have seen a growth in mechanized agriculture accompanied by a growth in investments. This was achieved through direct exploitation of the peasants by the latifundists (the so-called "Prussian way" of reinforcing the stratum of rich farmers), and the buying up of land by big foreign agricultural enterprises, or through investments made by Argentinian capitalists in medium-sized farms. This has resulted in mass unemployment among agricultural workers, in peasants being driven off the land and impoverishment of the middle and poor peasant.

The military dictatorship is in every possible way stimulating the process of capitalist concentration in agriculture, Raggio, Secretary for Agriculture (later removed from the government) tried to justify these measures on the grounds that "family farms" were unprofitable and that only big agricultural enterprises could hold their own on the world market, and should therefore be promoted.

The monopolies enjoy all kinds of government privileges, particularly with regard to taxes, enabling them to build big warehouses, supermarkets, and much else along these lines.

Concentration in industry, primarily benefitting the monopolies, is proceeding apace. Acting through Chase Manhattan and First National City Bank, the monopolies are stretching their tentacles to Argentina's private banks and planning also to abolish the state bank-

ing system and the National Bank in the first place.

In his report to a Central Committee meeting on June 2, Comrade Alvarez, General Secretary of the Party, characterized the struggle being waged as "a plebiscite in which public opinion has qualified the government of the dictatorship as the enemy of the nation." "The opposition's weakness," he noted, "is fundamentally that its actions are still scattered, and that it lacks a coordinating center."

Comrade Alvarez said in this connection:

As regards the Alsogaray group, which is quite incorrectly designated "liberal," it consists of reactionary and manifestly anti-Peronist and anti-Communist elements. Its anti-Peronism springs mainly from its hatred of the working class since the Peronists are mainly workers. Politically, this mass has clearly advanced, and the facts show that the Right can no longer lead them at will. Such is the big problem facing the two groups of the dictatorship. . . . As for Ongania, he is maneuvering to secure the Peronists' support, since he wants mass backing in his fight against Alsogaray. Clearly, Ongania's main objective is to use these masses with the help of certain corrupt union leaders to hamper the struggle of the working people.

Other military and civilian groups are looking for a "solution" of the political crisis "from above," and have no intention of allowing the people to have a say in the matter. General Aramburu, the former dictator, is playing a certain role in these maneuvers.

The political crisis has entered a new more acute phase as a result of Ongania's demand for the resignation of Alsogaray and the Air and Naval commanders although it was precisely these men who deposed President Illia and put Ongania in the saddle.

Growth in the Influence of the Communist Party

The working class plays the decisive role in the agrarian, democratic and anti-imperialist revolution. According to the National Development Council, in 1960, wage and salary workers totaled 5,259,747, or 69.22 per cent of the gainfully employed population. Of these more than two million were engaged in industry, 555,600 in transport, warehousing and communications, and 434,900 in construction. To this should be added approximately one million agricultural workers. Industrial concentration is fairly high, with 50 per cent of the labor force employed, according to the 1965 industrial census, in three per cent of the country's enterprises, and accounting for 50 per cent of industrial output. This big proportion

of the working class in a population of 22 million is a factor making for rapid realization of the tasks of the agrarian, democratic and anti-imperialist revolution and its subsequent transformation into a socialist revolution.

But before this can be achieved it is essential to free the masses from the influence of reformist and bourgeois-nationalist ideology which preaches class conciliation. The Communist Party has made considerable headway in this respect. Speaking of Peron, the aforementioned *Analisis* quoted a member of the iron and steel workers union as saying:

Peron in his time did a lot for us. But that was long ago. His historical cycle is over. He spoke a lot about handing over the land to those who till it, but never did. In his way of thinking and in his makeup Peron remains the purely military man. And the working-class movement of Argentina is now sufficiently adult to dispense with military leadership.

These sentiments are shared by many Peronist followers who, thanks to their own experience and our Party's activity, are inclining to class struggle and beginning to realize that Marxism-Leninism is the only true teaching. Despite vacillations, they are drawing closer to the Communist Party.

The Party is pointing to the need to overcome the lag in enrolling new members and educating them in the spirit of Communism, the need to secure a bigger circulation for the Party press and literature, although the illegal Party publications have a big readership. The Party aims at broadening its educational network and stresses the importance of stepping up work among young workers, students and peasants, and rendering more active assistance to the Communist Youth Federation. Communists are stepping up their propaganda among the military, and they are extending their contacts with progressive Catholics.

The defeat of the military dictatorship would benefit not only our country, but the entire national-liberation movement as well. In a May, 1967 dispatch, Associated Press reported Nixon, former U.S. vice-president and currently Republican candidate for the presidency, as saying during his Rio de Janeiro visit that he thinks the principal South American countries, and particularly Argentina and Brazil, should take upon themselves the policemen's role hitherto played by the United States, and that these countries should show a greater interest in the war in Vietnam.

The dictatorship provokes incidents on the border with Chile with the connivance of the anti-democratic groups in that country, backs reactionary measures in Uruguay, and hopes that its Pentagon masters will assign it a major role in Vietnam. The widespread actions of the Argentinian people, sparked by the Communist Party's efforts, are, in effect, a struggle for freedom, sovereignty and the well-being of the people, an expression of solidarity with the people of Vietnam, the Cuban revolution, and the peoples of Latin America.

The Party is working for unity of the international Communist movement, for solidarity between the Communist parties and the revolutionary movement in Latin America. Recently, it had bilateral meetings with the fraternal parties of Bolivia and Chile. A delegation of Argentinian Communists attended the recent congress of the Communist Party of Ecuador and before that, the congress of the Mexican Communist Party.

Striving for close contacts with all the Communist parties of the continent, the Communist Party of Argentina realizes that in cementing unity and promoting the mass struggle to put an end to the pro-imperialist dictatorship, it is acting in the spirit of the principles of proletarian internationalism.

Socialist dreams turned into the socialist struggle of the millions only when Marx's scientific socialism had linked up the urge for change with the struggle of a definite class. Outside the class struggle, socialism is either a hollow phrase or a naive dream.

Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 443.

Relevance of Marxist Economics to U.S. Conditions*

It is a custom of the vulgar critics of Marxism to say: "Marx predicted so-and-so. But the opposite happened. This proves that Marx was an oaf." Often these assertions are based on a crudely distorted version of what Marx actually said.

But Marx was not in the game of prediction. He was a student of society who sought to probe it to its very depths, to learn its basic laws of development, and to draw appropriate political conclusions therefrom. Occasionally, he made short-range estimates of the outcome of this or that situation, some of which proved wrong and some right. But his basic conclusions of a predictive character were not like those of the race-track handicapper; they were theorems derived by the most rigorous social science.

The given conditions in social life change infinitely more rapidly than those in nature. Therefore, even the best of theorems in social science must be tested continually against reality and are subject to being revised or supplanted. Still, if we take the more or less purely economic conclusions of Marx, and compare them with those of any other economist of the nineteenth century, we will see that Marx's conclusions stand up infinitely better to the realities of modern capitalism. Most to the point, however, is that Marx's fundamental *political* conclusions have been the most brilliantly vindicated in all history: a) that the fundamental conflict of capitalism was between the capitalists and the working class; and b) that the dynamics of this conflict must inevitably lead to the proletarian revolution, to working class power and the construction of socialist and communist society.

Marx and Engels believed in the unity of theory and practice. They were prime organizers of that Communist movement, based on scientific socialism, which has achieved victory in one-third of the world, population-wise, and is a growing factor globally.

Marxists, if they are to be effective, must combine ardent partisanship in the class struggle with scientific rigor in the study of reality. Subjective evaluation, substitution of the wish for the fact, invariably leads to defeat.

* Talk given at seminar, Union of Radical Political Economists, Philadelphia, December 20, 1968

To assess the applicability of Marxist economics to modern America, you cannot limit yourself to the teachings of Marx and Engels. You must also take into account the development of theory by later Marxists, of whom the most significant, undoubtedly, has been Lenin. There have been important post-World War II contributions by Marxist economists in Western countries and in the USSR as well.

Most of bourgeois economic theory is devoted to the attempt to rebut Marxism, and a particularly significant part of that is the attempt to rebut Marxism from the Left, so to speak, by claiming to be "more revolutionary" than Marxism.

It is my experience, in a lifetime of economic research motivated by partisanship to the American working class and Negro people, that Marxism provides an approach which permits the solution of most research problems, enables one to tear away the confusions perpetrated by apologist economists and establishment statisticians, enables one to really relate the dynamics of economic development with the struggles of the people, to develop programs and to help in particular campaigns, strikes, etc.

I want to discuss this more concretely with reference to five specific themes.

1. *Theory of Surplus Value and the Exploitation of Labor.*

We begin with the separation of workers from the means of production, the ownership of plants and equipment by the ruling class of capitalists. The workers have nothing to sell but their labor power. It becomes a commodity bought by the capitalists.

The value of a commodity is equal to the average number of hours of labor socially necessary to produce or reproduce it. The labor theory of value was formulated by the so-called classical economists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo and further developed by Marx. It remains valid today.

The value of the commodity labor power is determined in the same way. It is equal to the number of hours of labor socially necessary to reproduce the worker—to keep him going and working and raising his successors at a given standard of living. The value produced in the extra hours, or surplus value, is the basic source of capitalist profits, shared out in many parts among the capitalists and their top aides. This is the essence of exploitation.

Is this applicable to U.S. conditions? By all means; and as an increasing factor; and to *all* workers, other than bosses.

Take the latest statistics for U.S. manufacturing for the year of

1966. The value added by manufacture came to \$251 billion. Total payrolls of clerical and manual workers combined came to \$117 billion. So the owners got \$134 billion out of the labor of their workers, or 115 per cent of what the workers got. This is a rate of surplus value of 115 per cent. It is subject to various adjustments, mostly upward, which would bring it to 140 per cent. The rate of surplus value, that is, of the exploitation of labor, has been increasing. Marx used as an example a figure of 100 per cent as of a century ago. Actually, it was probably realistic at that time. Recent U.S. statistics show a rapidly rising trend over the past fifteen years.

Paul Sweezy, in *Monopoly Capital*, chooses the term "economic surplus" rather than "surplus value" because, he says, "the latter is probably identified in the minds of most people with Marxian economic theory as equal to the sum of profits + interests + rents." He then implies it should include other items also. But that is a very flimsy reason. In the first place, who does he mean by "most people?" In most Marxist literature dealing with surplus value the emphasis is not on the breakdown of its distribution, but on the conditions and amount of its extraction.

It seems that the real reason for Sweezy's discarding of the term "surplus value" is related to his political interpretation—he considers the exploitation of labor within the United States as mainly a thing of the past. The bulk of white workers, in his view, have been "coopted" by capitalism, integrated as consumers and ideologically conditioned members of society. They only suffer psychically from capitalism's irrationality.

But that is obviously not the case. The wages of American workers fall far below the U.S. Labor Department estimates of what is needed for a "moderate" living standard; 65 per cent of workers—including white collar and blue collar, white as well as black—are able to consume much less than the so-called "affluent American standard of living." The concept of "stuffed-goose capitalism" does not correspond to reality.

The exploitation of labor does not depend on the worker realizing it, or his understanding of the class struggle, but on its objective reality. The reality of exploitation and of the class struggle is revealed by the strike wave and many other signs of mass labor dissatisfaction.

The conditions of labor under capitalism provide powerful evidence of the oppressive nature of the system, over and beyond the statistical fact of exploitation. Marx stressed that the misery of the workers was

due to many causes connected with the accumulation of capital: "the lot of the laborer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse," he wrote. Of course, as Marx indicated, such laws can be modified through organization and struggle. Still, miserable conditions prevail in American industry today—speedup, lack of safety provisions, job insecurity, monotony, excessive hours, degradation of labor, arbitrary bosses, etc. Every intellectual should read the account of *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Roger Rapoport's one-week stint at Ford's:

Working on the line is gruelling and frustrating, and while it may be repetitive, it's not simple. I learned at first-hand why 250,000 auto workers are unhappy about working conditions. I'm in fairly good physical shape, but I ached all over after each day's work on the line. Nobody seemed to take any particular pride in his work. (*Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 1967.)

He described the breakneck speed of the line, the frequent violation of safety rules, the gulped lunch—all in one of Ford's newest, best plants.

Marxism provides the strategic key to the efforts of radicals to orient on the working class, to help workers in the struggle to organize, to merge with the working class in strike battles against employers, to raise the consciousness of workers to an understanding of their own historic revolutionary role in ending exploitation through working-class power and socialism.

2. Capitalism and Racism

You all know Marx's famous statement: the worker in a white skin cannot be free while the worker in a black skin is branded.

Genuine Marxists have always been aware of this and have fought for the liberation of black men, for the unity of white and black labor, as an essential for the socialist revolution. In this country the record goes back to the abolitionists and the Communist General Joseph Weydemeyer, appointed by Lincoln, in the Civil War. And it continues in the entire history of the modern Communist Party, whose greatest glory, whose outstanding contribution in nearly fifty years, has been its pioneering in the struggle for black and white unity and in arousing widespread national support for the black liberation struggle.

Famous Communist-originated slogans chart the course of that history: Negro and White, Unite and Fight; Self-determination for

the Black Belt; Free the Scottsboro Boys; James Ford for Vice President; Charlene Mitchell for President.

It is the particular contention of Marxists that only the capitalists are the real gainers from special exploitation of black workers. An example of this is the comparison of wages, North and South. The oppression of black workers, of course, is much worse in the South than in the North. In 1967, Negro families in the South earned \$2,265 less, on the average, than Negro families in the North.

Did southern workers gain or lose from this, from supposedly being the beneficiaries of an open, undisguised system of complete priority? The facts show they lost. The extra oppression of black workers only subjected the white workers to stronger competition on the labor market, even though that competition remained generally potential. White families in the South, on the average, earned \$1,212 less than white families in the North. Applied to 12,300,000 southern white families, this gives a loss of just under \$15 billion a year. And this is over and above the losses suffered by all white workers, North and South, from the economic discrimination against black workers.

The southern textile industry is a classic example. Southern white workers, as a "special privilege," were permitted to work in textile mills at wages and conditions radically undercutting those in the North. The northern textile industry was almost annihilated by this, and hundreds of thousands of white textile workers suffered cuts in real wages and then were thrown on the industrial scrap heap.

Strongholds of jim crow are often strongholds of successful employer resistance to trade unionism, to decency and dignity of labor, to providing minimum living conditions.

In the research field, I may say, I pioneered in the postwar period in establishing a quantitative measure of the superexploitation of black workers as a major source of superprofits of U.S. imperialism. This type of calculation has since become general. But the main point has yet to be fully worked out. And this is, the all-around proof of the harm to white workers from this superexploitation of the black workers, and the campaign to convince the masses of white workers that *in their own interest*, they must unite with black workers and join them in the fight for equality.

Thus the approach of Marxism is based on the following theses:

—The liberation of the black people is only possible together with and through the liberation of the working class as a whole.

—Such partial demands as black capitalism and black control of

ghettos are limited, and do not provide the strategic solution.

—Even under capitalism gains can be won, however, primarily at the point of production, where black-white unity is the key.

—The main enemy and oppressor of the black people is the capitalist and not the misguided white workers. The former must be fought and exposed. The latter must be argued with and won over to unity.

3. *Imperialism and Finance Capital*

The great crisis of the 1930's led to the exposure in this country of the ugly reality of modern monopoly capital. Lenin's teachings became widespread, directly and indirectly. Congressional investigations, the Roosevelt electoral campaigns, the CIO organizing drive—all of these brought to light the rule of America by a handful of tycoons of merged banking and industrial monopolies, as explained by Lenin in his masterpiece, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

After World War II there were a plethora of theories designed to undermine that understanding, to recreate faith in American capitalism. We had the managerial revolution, people's capitalism, the income revolution and, "from the Left," the cybercultural revolution. Sweezy and many other liberals and progressives tended to fall into the trap of these apologetic theories. Sweezy, for example, talks of the vanishing of bank capital as an important factor.

However, Marxism provides the basis for studying the real facts and exposing all of this nonsense. Examples in my own work are: *The Empire of High Finance, People's Capitalism and Stock Ownership* and *The "Income Revolution."* Now with the spread of conglomerates, this is becoming obvious to everybody again as witness the work *Who Rules America* by G. William Domhoff, of Lampman on concentration of wealth, and now the latest material from the House Banking and Currency Committee.

Here are some key facts from this latest report: One hundred banks with \$200 billion in trust assets control most of the giant corporations of the country. Most of these are controlled by 15 banks with \$113 billion of trust assets. The First National Bank of Chicago has over 5 per cent of the stock of 401 companies. The Chemical Bank New York Trust Company has interlocking directorates with 278 companies. The Morgan Guaranty Trust Company has 5-20 per cent of the stock of all leading copper companies save Anaconda. In 55 years the assets of non-financial corporations increased 18 times, of financial corporations 40 times.

We have a picture of a few centers of financial-industrial power having absolute sway over the economy, over the government, and—yes—over the Pentagon.

These financial tycoons, despite all their demagogy, are the real organizers of racism—from the ghettos of U.S. cities to the mines of South Africa. They are the organizers of militarism and wars of aggression. They are the organizers of international runaway shops, of mine disasters and depressed areas, of inflation eating away the pension of old people and taxes cutting the living standards of workers, of multiversities thwarting the striving for truth and basic learning of student youth.

But do we expose them just to make a sensation? No. This analysis is a guide to action. We have the potential for an alliance of all anti-monopoly forces which in one way or another are exploited or oppressed or subordinated by these centers. An alliance is possible on such issues as peace, tax reform, aspects of black liberation, university reform, a new political party not dominated by Wall Street. That is how Marxists unite theory with practical politics. But in such an alliance, we strive always for the leading role of the working class, which by its position in society is most consistently pitched against the capitalist class, has the potential of leading in struggle to a more revolutionary height, and preparing for further stages.

4. *Export of Capital and External Imperialism*

A key contribution of Lenin was the establishment of the decisive importance of the export of capital, as compared with the export of goods, in the era of imperialism. For many years, the illusion was spread in this country by apologists for capitalism, and by some Left circles, that the export of capital had lost its importance as a means of exploitation. The open apologists of imperialism spread the propoganda, in the universities and elsewhere, that investments were a form of foreign aid which were helping underdeveloped countries. Some progressives grossly underestimated its importance.

This mistake has now largely been recognized owing to the very boasting of the imperialists themselves on the enormous scale of foreign investments. Today, goods produced in mines and factories owned by U.S. corporations abroad, amount to over \$100 billion yearly. As of nearly a decade ago, the 25 largest industrials made 29 per cent of their profits from foreign investments. Surely this percentage is higher now. The biggest banks, previously mentioned,

have \$14 billion, or up to one-third of all their deposits, in foreign branches. This sum has expanded with fabulous speed in just these last few years.

The object of foreign investment, the superexploitation of workers in other countries, remains paramount. A prime example is provided by Taiwan and South Korea, where the connection between military conquest by the U.S. and superprofits derived by U.S. corporations is most obvious. In these countries, such corporate giants as IBM, wearing a paternalistic veneer at home, ruthlessly exploit the girls of these occupied lands in the most modern electronic factories for wages of \$15 per month.

Here is a gem from the *Journal of Commerce* (December 12, 1968): Some businessmen contend that the government should end the chronic deficit in its payments account, resulting from foreign aid and its vast military commitments around the world. Confronted with this argument at a recent business convention, the Director of the Office of Foreign Direct Investments of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Charles E. Fiero, asked: "What would happen to our investments in the Middle East, and the earnings and exports they bring, if the U.S. withdrew the Sixth Fleet from the Mediterranean?" No one answered him.

The struggle for national liberation on a global scale is today largely against the same corporations as black workers fight seeking escape from the ghettos, as industrial workers fight seeking decent wages, job security and relief from speedup. Hence the goal of international unity of anti-imperialist forces, the consistent attempts of Communists—going back to before World War I—to organize the struggle precisely against their own imperialists as the way to liberation and socialism. This applies fully to the United States today, and again it is fair to say that the Communist-Marxists were pioneers in this respect. If we consider the postwar period, it was exactly because the Communists pioneered in exposing and organizing the struggle against the cold-war policies of aggression, the Marshall Plan, etc., that reaction turned on them so furiously, used endless pressure to try to destroy them organizationally, and threw their leadership into prison under the Smith Act.

Today, it is a great thing that the anti-imperialist movement within the United States has reached significant, broad proportions. History shows the value of Marxism, and Marxists, in developing that struggle. It is necessary in this period to broaden that struggle, to bring the main sections of the working class into it.

5. *The USSR, the Working Class and the "Third World"*

A major aspect of Marxism cannot be gotten in detail from the works of Marx and Lenin, because it represents developments after both of them. And that is the relationship of the modern highly developed, powerful socialist world to the working class of the capitalist countries and to the national liberation movement.

The pioneering achievements of the Soviet Union in realizing full employment, cradle-to-grave social security, socialized medicine, a shorter workweek, steadily rising real wages, have been an inspiration to the struggle of workers in capitalist countries and have helped them to win corresponding demands in these countries. This is especially evident in Western Europe.

The achievement of working-class power in the Soviet Union was the most powerful stimulant to the development of socialist and communist revolutionary movements in all the capitalist countries. The material and moral aid of the working class in power in the USSR to the workers of capitalist countries should not be minimized.

The achievement of true national equality within the USSR was a decisive stimulant of the anti-imperialist movement throughout Asia and Africa.

Today, the economically powerful Soviet Union provides tremendous material assistance to all countries striving for liberation from the yoke of imperialism. Yet, we have such absurdities in the United States as people, who consider themselves great friends of socialist Cuba, socialist North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, simultaneously denouncing the Soviet Union as a "partner" of U.S. imperialism. The reality is, that with all of the heroism of the Cubans, the U.S. would have long since conquered that island without the enormous material and military aid of the USSR, without the readiness of the USSR to go to war with the U.S., if necessary, in the event of a U.S. invasion of Cuba.

Similar considerations prevail in relations to Vietnam. The liberation of Vietnam is mainly the effort of the Vietnamese themselves. But the enormous and growing assistance of the USSR is absolutely essential, as is the peace movement and resistance in the United States and other capitalist countries.

The study of the economic competition between the two world systems becomes one of the important areas of progressive research, one of the significant fields for the application of Marxism to Ameri-

can conditions, as the United States is the main factor in such competition on the side of capitalism.

The development of friendly relations between progressives in capitalist countries and the socialist lands is very important. The imperialists pay big rewards for just a little bit of anti-Sovietism. They know where their enemy is.

What is necessary is not to idealize or idolize the Soviet Union, but to appreciate its tremendous forward strides, its vital positive role in world affairs today and in the cause of liberation of all people.

Marxism and Progressive Economics Today

There are a multitude of unsolved problems, intimately related to the ongoing struggles in the United States. And there is a need for the application of Marxism to their solution.

Consider such complex problems as taxation, education, housing. Once you take a class approach in digging into these problems, you will find solutions opening up, answers as to who is responsible and why, how to organize, and around what programs to organize for change.

Today unions are at a great disadvantage in dealing with multinational corporations and with employers able to shuffle around government contracts. Take the approach of Lenin and you will find the keys to the riddles, identify the allies for the anti-imperialist struggle, establish the real balance of forces within the so-called military-industrial complex and the power elite.

For radical economists there is an unlimited field of activity providing light and fighting material to the struggles of the American people—the struggle for full employment, for liberation of black people, for peace—and, further along the road, the struggle for the liberation from capitalist oppression and exploitation, for socialism.

Never have struggles been conducted on a more sophisticated level than today. Never have facts, research and informed propaganda been more necessary. Whether in the colleges teaching youth, whether in trade union research departments, or on the staffs of liberation organizations or peace organizations, whether on labor or progressive publications, there is an infinite field of creative work for progressive economists. Marxism will provide the approach and body of knowledge which will add enormously to the effectiveness, direction, optimistic outlook and success of that work.

IDEAS IN OUR TIME

HERBERT APTHEKER

Present Needs in the Study of Afro-American History

Flowing out of and simultaneously part of the historic shift in the relationship of forces in the post-World War II globe is the tremendous rise in the level of the Black Liberation struggle in the United States. Manifesting and contributing to that rise has been a breakthrough in the area of the historiography of African-derived peoples in our country.

Twenty—even fifteen—years ago it was correct to point out that sins of omission and of commission, that is, of outright distortion, characterized the body of history-writing in the United States insofar as that body was white chauvinist to the core and in a most blatant way. In the case of elementary and high-school textbooks this is still largely true—though not as complete as two decades ago; but in the case of college texts and the more serious run of history books this is no longer true. The bland omission of Negro masses is rare today in such works and the crassest kinds of lying and distortion rarely appear.

On this level, the problems facing battlers against racism are different than a generation ago. Now the defense of racism appears in two guises; they are the following: 1) Myrdalian-Freudian; 2) efforts at cooptation and institutionalization. Frequently, the two are combined.

In the first, one finds a philosophically idealist approach, characterized by emphasis upon subjective, individualized and more or less elusive but always multiple “factors” producing a kind of Greek tragedy. Here causation tends to be denied, victim and victimizers confounded, socio-economic-historic sources ignored or denied and, normally, one is left with the “problem” being in fact the “mark of oppression,” as Ovesey-Kardiner called it, or the destroyed family and emasculated male, as Moynihan labelled it, or the thwarted and perverted personality of the oppressed—as the Elkins-Genovese group has it, as fictionalized in the Styron travesty on Nat Turner. Objectively, this kind of writing eventuates in the Phillipian approach

which had the relative "virtue" of frank racism; in this sense, it is relevant that there has been a resurgence in the prestige of U. B. Phillips among sectors of the historical profession.*

Perhaps efforts at cooptation and institutionalization are more serious; certainly, they are more prevalent. They may and often do go along with the Myrdalian-Freudian approach but normally they are less sophisticated and involved than that. Usually, these efforts come down to this: Well, yes, history books in the past have more or less omitted the "dark brother" and this was unfortunate; we even apologize for the oversight. But now that this has been called to our attention, we remedy it and we do this by no longer overlooking him, hitherto in the shadow. We open the lens and now we do discern the "other one"; well, now that the lens is opened, there he is and there we are and all of us are doing about the same things and it is "settled." Here efforts will be made, a la Oscar Handlin, to treat the matter as yet another "minority" question with the "melting pot" come to a boil and ready for more meat.

One finds now the "market" literally deluged with books in the area of Negro history; it is difficult even for one whose work is in that field to keep abreast of, let alone digest, this outpouring. And now that there is a "market" there is no economic system in the history of Man so adept as that functioning in the United States for the production of profitable "commodities."

Much of it—even that greater proportion which falls within one or the other school sketched above—offers material of value: new findings, new emphases. Further, no matter how diluted and attenuated the material may be, given the profound chauvinism afflicting most Americans, that matter may nudge the brain or jar the conscience. Also, part of the price the ruling class must pay is that literature outside the desired twin-stream is produced more easily now while that produced earlier reaches a larger readership today than twenty years ago. Thus, among the anthologies produced in the recent past are such works as Floyd Barbour's *Black Power* (Porter Sargent, Boston, 1968) and Joanne Grant's *Black Protest* (Fawcett, New York, 1968) which certainly are not institutional products.

But fundamentally, the flood seeks not so much to destroy the

* This goes along with a persistent and more or less vicious attack upon the work—and, at times, the person—of the present writer; I am not here referring to criticism which is inevitable and often merited but I am talking about efforts at annihilation which are basically political and contemptible.

obsolete as to screen it, the better to preserve it. And even where elements of militancy or genuine protest appear often these are ensconced within reformist and moderationist boundaries and so the appearance disguises the actual function.

* * *

The fact is that in the class-divided and intensely racist society which is and has been the United States, the most tormented single bloc among the sorely-oppressed have been the black millions. This has been fundamental to all social struggle and to all class struggle in the United States; therefore, it has been fundamental to the history of this country and the single most glaring and most acute reflection of the struggle component of that history.

The present movement of the twenty-three million black people in the United States is not a reformist one but is a revolutionary one; this is true in both national and in class terms. And that which is true today has been true—in varying degrees—ever since the 17th century. Therefore, anyone who views the present effort as non-revolutionary misses its nature; and anyone who views the history of black peoples in the United States as other than a revolutionary history misses its nature.

Hence, to examine and to present that history as a kind of aberration or mistake or psychological deficiency (suffered either by white or black or both) is basically erroneous; it distorts that history; it excuses or justifies racism; it fails to grasp the centrality of the black experience to the very nature and the entire past and therefore the future of the United States.

* * *

Now, perhaps, we are in a position to offer certain suggestions as to areas in that history that cry out for dedicated scholarship. Chronologically: there is no overall work which weighs the meaning of slavery and racism to colonial society. We need an examination of every facet of the colonial experience—economic, religious, ideological, social, political—from this viewpoint. There is no overall work that examines the relationship of the American Indian and Afro-American in that early period or through the era of the Indian Wars, that only ends with the end of the 19th century.

There still is no overall work on the Abolitionist movement that

does full justice to the significance and the complexity of the Negro's connection therewith and role therein; nor is there as of this date such a study of the whole phenomenon of racism: origins, impact, character, struggle for and against. There is no modern and deep study of such basic institutions in the life of the black millions as the churches, the fraternal and social organizations, the press, cooperative and nationalistic organizations and societies.

There is still no overall study of labor, labor organizations and racism; of the attitude towards such organizations on the part of black peoples. There is almost nothing on U.S. foreign policy and the black millions and racism of any period. There is no thorough study of the relationship of the wars of this country and the black peoples; especially is this true of the wars of the last sixty or seventy years.

There is no good study of radicalism and black people; nor of radical organizations and black people, including the Communist Party. The need here is all the more urgent because the very few studies in this area are especially poor.

Particularly neglected has been the more recent history of the Negro masses; especially from about 1910 on. Especially important here, in addition to areas touched on above, would be studies of the youth and of women. We urgently need also studies of the tactical and strategic debates that have marked the history of black people in the United States; of the *ideas they have projected* and discussed.

In all the cases cited above, important contributions would be made if modest segments—chronological or geographic or topical—were chosen and concentrated upon and the results published.

• • •

To accomplish the above or any part of it, its consequence must be grasped and the importance of devoted scholarship must be comprehended. Partisanship, too, is basic; for without this the passion required and the objectivity needed will not come.

The Left in the United States must have this kind of scholarship; it is now in my view a matter of life and death. Scholarship is not sucked out of the thumb and it cannot be replaced by Party membership. Scholarship is ninety-five percent hard and diligent—and usually “unrewarding”—work. There is, however, nothing more thrilling than to face a problem and to work on it and work on it and to begin to see the pieces fall into place and then to have the consummate joy of reaching a solution, or—at any rate—what seems to be a solu-

tion. This must not conflict with being part of the struggle; scholarship does not mean retirement or removal. Such scholarship tends towards sterility and often descends into a kind of antiquarianism. We, who are Communists, have after all pretty good models in Marx and Engels and Lenin; their scholarship was not of a low order, was it? And their participation in the movement(s) of their days was not occasional, was it?

Concerted, dedicated, organized scholarship on the Left and in the Communist Party in the first place is now on the order of urgent business.

January 17, 1969

MARTIN LUTHER KING HONORING DR. W. E. B. DU BOIS

Dr. Du Bois was a man possessed of priceless dedication to his people. The vast accumulation of achievement and public recognition were not for him pathways to personal affluence and a diffusion of identity. Whatever else he was, with his multitude of careers and professional titles, he was first and always a black man. He used his richness of talent as a trust for his people. He saw that Negroes were robbed of so many things decisive to their existence that the theft of their history seemed only a small part of their losses. But Dr. Du Bois knew that to lose one's history is to lose one's self-understanding and with it the roots for pride. This drove him to become a historian of Negro life and the combination of his unique zeal and intellect recued for all of us a heritage whose loss would have profoundly impoverished us.

Dr. Du Bois the man needs to be remembered today when despair is all too prevalent. In the years he lived and fought there was far more justification for frustration and hopelessness and yet his faith in his people never wavered. His love and faith in Negroes permeate every sentence of his writings and every act of his life. Without these deeply rooted emotions his work would have been arid and abstract. With them his deeds were a passionate storm that swept the filth of falsehood from the pages of established history.

He symbolized in his being his pride in the black man. He did not apologize for being black and because of it, handicapped. Instead he attacked the oppressor for the crime of stunting black men. He confronted the establishment as a model of militant manhood and integrity. He defied them and though they heaped venom and scorn on him his powerful voice was never stilled.

Freedomways, Spring 1968

The Marx Memorial Library

The Marx Memorial Library in London—like any memorabilia—serves two purposes: to contribute to the emotional support of ideology and to provide the sense of continuity in history that is increasingly difficult to preserve in the ever faster pace of events. But its content uniquely provides, Marxists are convinced, the ideology required by revolutionary ardor for direction and purpose.

Established by a distinguished committee in March, 1933, as the Nazis were burning books in the streets of Germany, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Marx, the project was approved by 66 delegates from trade unions and councils, 24 from Communist Party branches, 11 from the Independent Labor Party and 58 others. A grand, dilapidated, three-story brick building was procured in the heart of the tempestuous old Clerkenwell district, rehabilitated largely by volunteer labor. In October of the same year the project was approved, classes began and "The initial public lecture was delivered on Sunday morning, November 5—"The Life of Marx," by Tom Mann, leader of the 1889 Dock Strike, a friend of Eleanor Marx and of Frederick Engels."

The quotation is from the fascinating story of the building, the area and the development of the library by its modest and competent director and labor historian, Andrew Rothstein, who was

awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor by the USSR on his 70th birthday, September 26, 1968. (This is being written on the writer's 70th.) The story is the first reference here, given now because nearly all that should be said is in it, but two other relevant booklets are cited which should also interest American Marxists, especially those who visit London.

Andrew Rothstein, *A House on Clerkenwell Green*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1966, 80 pages, 7/6d (one dollar from the library). Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London E.C. 1.

Communist Party of Great Britain, *London Landmarks*, A Guide with Maps to Places where Marx, Engels and Lenin Lived and Worked, 13 pages, 1/64 (25¢ or five for a dollar). Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, W.C. 2

Phil Piratin, M.P., *Our Flag Is Still Red*, Thames Publishers, 1948, 91 pages, 2/6d (40¢ if procurable outside of libraries). *Morning Star*, 75 Farrington Road, London E.C. 1.

During 1959-60 we discovered and explored three depositories of literature on social change: the elaborate and hospitable Feltrinelli Institute in Milan, based upon collections rescued from fascist and Nazi book burners and collectors with various motives; the older Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, well stocked but now securely in the U.S. orbit; and the Marx Memorial Library, humble but captivating. Policies of the first have changed some-

what with the interests of Mr. G. Feltrinelli and we hear its scope is narrowing to Italian studies. At the second we were amused by the wide-eyed discovery of a librarian that he could earn a month's pay by reporting on the Dutch Communist Party to the U.S. magazine *Contemporary Communism*. The third is probably entering a period of expansion and impressive influence, for physical restoration and some enlargement and refurbishing are under way and the British public is moving Leftward for lack of any other direction.

During a recent interview with R. Palme Dutt, a great British Marxist editor of the international *Labor Monthly* (which we should read more frequently), he suggested, perhaps facetiously, that it is clearly the policy of the upper class to turn Britain, under the trustworthy misleadership of the Labor Party, into a vast museum of capitalism. Perhaps the development of the Marx Memorial Library may be viewed as a dialectical aspect of this.

The Clerkenwell district of London, since the insurrection of the Levellers, has been the scene of street demonstrations for freedom of expression and amelioration of the plight of the poor. From the area poured marchers to support John Wilkes, to protest hunger in 1817 and the Peterloo massacre in 1818, to support the Chartists, to welcome Garibaldi in the 1860's, as radicals, socialists, atheists, Irish nationalists, unemployed and Communists. It is an

area allied with Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square in the history of struggle for freedom to protest and to demonstrate.

The Marx House is early Georgian. With great diligence and persistence Director Rothstein secured a preservation order from the Greater London Council in October, 1966 and had it confirmed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government in April, 1967. His letter in *The Times* of May 5, 1967, said:

This house, built in 1738 by James Steere for the Welsh Charity School and owned by the latter's trustees, the Honorable and Loyal Society of Ancient Britons, until 1772, was tenanted in the nineteenth century by one of the best-known London Radical workmen's clubs, and later by the press of the Social-Democratic Federation, before it became the property of the Marx Memorial Library in 1933. John Stuart Mill, Sir Charles Dilke, William Morris, the first Indian M.P. Dadabhai Naoroji, George Lansbury and Peter Kropotkin are among the famous men who supported, or spoke at, the house during the last 100 years.

The trustees of the Library have undertaken an obligation, which the Minister has accepted to restore the front of the house as nearly as is reasonable to its eighteenth century appearance, with appropriate consequential improvements to the other sides, and generally to improve the building. Thus restored, and together with the later edifices close by—St. James's Church, Clerkenwell (1788-1792) and the old Middlesex Sessions House (1778-1779)—the building will make an agreeable village ensemble, a notable start for

the general replanning of Clarks-well Green. It will thus enhance the amenity of the public open space which the borough council of Islington aims to provide at the rear.

Most important to many is the fact that in the center of the building, preserved intact, is the little room in which Lenin in 1902-3 edited *Iskra*, "The Spark" that set Russia on fire for socialism, a room that now spiritually belongs to the whole world.

Mr. Rothstein's letter ended with an appeal for aid signed by distinguished Britishers, not all Marxists by any means. It was estimated that 30,000 pounds would be needed and the job completed by February 6, 1969. However, as is usual in restoring old places, weak walls, sub-basements, rotten timbers, chances for improvements were discovered that add to costs and time. Definitely the facility will be completed and open to the public in May, with a summer program that will deserve the interest of visiting Americans.

Some 22,000 pounds has been raised, principally in Eastern Europe. About \$25,000 is needed and, except for Corliss Lamont, few Americans have contributed much. Checks should be made out to the Hon. Treasurer, Marx House Restoration Fund, and sent to The Cooperative Wholesale Society, Bankers, 99 Leman Street, London E. 1, or to Richard Storer, Treasurer, Marx Memorial Library. Membership is 10s; plus subscription (Quarterly Bulletin and announcements) 25s; asso-

ciate membership is 5s plus 10s. An American can get most mailings for a year for two dollars, and full information, including mailings and the first and second citation under our third paragraph, for five dollars. One value of announcements of lectures, beyond book lists and borrowing rights, is notice of speakers, whose language is English, with whom one may correspond regarding topics of special interest.

Fourteen thousand books and 17,000 pamphlets, plus special collections of labor union, political campaign, and agitational literature, is not a great collection quantitatively, but it has its distinctions, is growing rapidly and is inter-related. The librarian is Mr. John Williamson, deported from the United States a few years ago after a lifetime of labor as Communist organizer in the Middle West and national leader; the secretary is Mr. Leo Gollhard, British veteran. These men, with the director, work twice the hours for which they are paid minimally. The Bulletin editor is Phyllis Bell, widow of the British Communist leader who died during the war, Tom Bell. We hadn't the heart to ask if she and Mr. Storer are paid anything. The president is the great scientist, Marxist, world peace leader, Professor J. D. Bernal, but he is unwell and seldom about these days.

After you visit the grave of Karl Marx in Highgate Cemetery, drop into the Marx Memorial Library to see his spirit marching on.

BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN ABT

The Trial of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

Twenty-eight years after the event, Corliss Lamont has performed an important service in making available the transcript of the trial of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn by her colleagues on the Board of the American Civil Liberties Union and her expulsion from that body because of her membership in the Communist Party.*

Had Miss Flynn lived to write the second volume of her memoirs,** she would have told the story in her own inimitable way. Lacking her account, we are all the more indebted to Dr. Lamont for unearthing the record of the bizarre proceeding. A member of the A.C.L.U. Board at the time, he was one of Miss Flynn's most vigorous and principled defenders. He has prefaced the trial transcript with an illuminating introduction and has added an appendix containing the texts of relevant documents.

This reviewer, one of Miss Flynn's lawyers, a co-worker in the defense of the civil liberties of Communists, and an old friend,

**The Trial of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn by the American Civil Liberties Union*, edited by Corliss Lamont, Horizon Press, New York, \$5.95.

**The first volume, *I Speak My Own Piece* (New York, 1955) ends with 1926.

read Dr. Lamont's slender volume with compelling interest. It evoked vivid memories of a most remarkable woman—ardent champion of the working class; "agitator" in the finest sense of the word; forceful speaker; straightforward, blunt, completely unselfish; passionately loyal to her friends, scornful of vacillators, opportunists and backsliders; unyielding in defense of her socialist views, her party, and the Soviet Union. And the whole woman made the more endearing by a lovely face, sparkling blue eyes and a lively Irish wit that bubbled up on the most solemn occasions, even when the joke was on herself. (As when, at the trial, she distributed what she thought were copies of the constitution of the Communist Party to each board member, only to find that the publisher had supplied her with the U.S. Constitution instead.)

Recalled, too, was the sudden illness and tragic death of her son Fred just as the trial was to take place. Mr. Lamont notes that the board was gracious enough to postpone the proceedings for six weeks on that account. But the hatchet job was then rushed through in a single six-hour session ending at 2:00 a.m. The chairman (Rev. John Haynes

Holmes) brushed aside the motion of one member to adjourn at midnight "in the interests of a fair trial for Miss Flynn," evidently on the advice of Lady Macbeth that "when 'tis done, then t'were well it were done quickly."

As in the trial of Alice, this was a case of "sentence first, verdict afterwards." The outcome was pre-determined by a resolution of the board, adopted three months earlier, reciting that "consistency in the defense of civil liberties in all aspects . . . is inevitably compromised by persons who champion civil liberties in the United States and yet who justify or tolerate the denial of civil liberties by dictatorships abroad." On this pretext, the resolution barred from the governing committees and staff of the A.C.L.U. members of any organization "such as the Communist Party" which "supports totalitarian dictatorships in any country."

Adoption of the resolution prompted the resignation of Dr. Harry F. Ward from the board chairmanship which he had held for twenty years. With characteristic precision and unassailable logic, he wrote in his letter of resignation (included in the present volume):

The essence of civil liberties is opposition to all attempts to enforce political orthodoxy. Yet by the resolution the Civil Liberties Union is attempting to create an orthodoxy in civil liberties, and stranger still, an orthodoxy in political judgment upon events outside the United

States, in situations of differing degrees of democratic development. The majority of the Board and of the National Committee, acting under the pressure of wartime opinion, tells the minority to conform to its views or get out. What kind of civil liberties is this? . . .

Furthermore, when the Union disqualifies for membership in its governing bodies any person "who is a member of any political organization which supports totalitarian dictatorships in any country" it is using the principle of guilt by association which it has always opposed when the government has sought to enforce it.

Elizabeth Flynn's association with the A.C.L.U., like Dr. Ward's, was long and honorable. A charter member of the organization, she could ask her accusers, without fear of contradiction, "Is there any member of this Board whose record as a consistent militant fighter for these rights can outweigh the records of William Z. Foster [a former A.C.L.U. National Committee member] and myself, since the first free speech fight in Spokane Washington, in 1910, which was not our first arrest?"

That record led to her election to the A.C.L.U. Board in 1936. She joined the Communist Party the following year, and so advised her fellow board members "as a matter of courtesy" (her words). She was nevertheless unanimously elected to another three-year term in 1939. As she wrote in her *Sunday Worker* column after the charges were filed:

So there was no deception on my

part and no objection on their part. Mr. Roger N. Baldwin, the director, used to boast of their broadness. "Why we even have a Communist on our Board!" and timid old ladies thrilled at his bravery.

But Mr. Baldwin's "bravery" vanished under the impact of the anti-Communist hysteria generated by the Soviet-German pact, the outbreak of World War II and the Soviet invasion of Finland, and brought to a high pitch by the House Un-American Activities Committee under its first chairman, Martin Dies.

As Dr. Lamont points out, the stage was set for the A.C.L.U. retreat at a Washington cocktail conference between Dies and A.C.L.U. co-counsel Morris Ernst and Arthur Garfield Hays. Following the conference, Dies not only desisted from his attacks on the organization but cleared it of Communist taint. The pay-off for this whitewash was the adoption of the anti-Communist resolution and the expulsion of Miss Flynn.

Dr. Lamont identifies Ernst and Baldwin as the principal architects of the sell-out. Ernst has served as personal attorney for such dedicated civil libertarians as J. Edgar Hoover and the Dominican butcher-dictator Trujillo. And it was his proposal, made at about the time of the Flynn trial, for a "Security and Exchange Commission for ideas" that eventuated in the registration provisions of the McCarran Act.

I should not therefore have been startled, as I was, to discover that many of the questions

flung at Miss Flynn that night in 1940 were almost verbatim those asked of her by a Department of Justice prosecutor a decade later when she testified in the McCarran Act proceeding against the Communist Party. Like these samples from the 1940 transcript:

Is the Communist Party of the United States subject to direction from—what is it, the Third International or the Fourth?

Has the Party here ever rejected any policy which has been determined by the Third International?

How about the members of the Communist Party? Do they swear obedience to the determinations of the Communist Party?

Do you believe in civil liberties or merely in the use of civil liberties to change this Government so we will have a Communist form over here.

The McCarran Act employs exactly the same criteria—"foreign control," "non-deviation of policies," "internal discipline," and "subversive intent"—to outlaw organizations and penalize their members. Of course, the A.C.L.U. was not the inventor of these techniques. Nor was its adoption of them responsible for the rise of McCarranism and McCarthyism. But certainly, the early, easy and abject surrender of its principles by the organization which had been the nation's most consistent and respected defender of civil liberties contributed to the near blackout of those liberties that occurred in the 1950's.

The A.C.L.U., as Dr. Lamont

writes, has done much good work nonetheless. In recent years, particularly, it has not hesitated to take the offensive against anti-Communist legislation, and has been generous in the offer of its services to defend individual Communists. Yet the 1940 resolution remained in effect until May of this year. Even then, it was replaced after long debate only by a "compromise" which eliminates

the explicitness but retains the essence of the original.

Dr. Lamont rightly emphasizes that the organization cannot be fully effective until it expunges all traces of the 1940 resolution and repudiates any "compromise" between its practices and the civil libertarian principles it professes. It may be hoped that publication of *The Trial of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn* will help to speed that day.

TOM FOLEY

North Korea Revisited

Wilfred Burchett's newest book* is about the land where he first came to the attention of the world through his magnificent reporting on the peace talks at Kaesong and Panmunjom. In 1967, he returned to the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) to see what changes had been made since July 27, 1953, the day the "police action" officially came to an end.

Fifteen years ago, not a factory, school, hospital, pagoda, or major building of any kind was left undestroyed in the North. Pyongyang, the capital, a city of 400,000 in 1960, had only a population of 80,000 by 1953, mainly reduced by evacuation. There were two buildings left standing, now maintained as museum pieces. A total of 390,000 bombs had hit

* Wilfred G. Burchett, *Again Korea*, International Publishers, New York, 1968. Paperback \$1.95.

the city. All over the DPRK this state of affairs was repeated. When, Burchett writes: "No country in history suffered so much material destruction, except some small states in the direct path of the Mongol invaders," one recalls that the modern hordes of Genghis Khan had their banner the pale-blue flag of the U.N. and claimed to be "repelling aggression."

Material destruction—yes. But the will to live and rebuild grew more fierce and strong. By August 5, 1953, Burchett relates, Premier Kim Il Sung proposed a Three-Year Plan to rebuild the country, and thereafter a Five-Year Plan to create a strong, independent industrial economy for the DPRK. Kim Il Sung visited scores of factories and farms within days after the Armistice, talking to the workers and peas-

ants, asking them to start rebuilding with whatever tools and materials were at hand. In a few weeks, the entire railway system was functioning, crops were planted, and factories were beginning to emerge from the rubble. The Three-Year recovery plan actually was completed in 1955. By 1958, the DPRK had double the per capita income of the alleged "Republic of Korea" to the south and was militarily strong enough to stand on its own.

Today, the DPRK manufactures 95 percent of its industrial equipment and exports industrial goods to places like Czechoslovakia and the G.D.R. Industry accounts for 76 per cent of the GNP (1946=28 per cent). Collectivized agriculture makes the DPRK self-sufficient in food; the fields are fertilized with Korean-produced chemicals and plowed with Korean-designed and manufactured tractors built of Korean steel. The DPRK has free 9-year schooling, 98 universities and higher educational establishments (where not one existed before 1945), and has graduated 20,000 doctors and 170,000 engineers and specialists since 1953.

One would feel tempted to use the term "Phoenix-like" to describe this tremendous growth and development which has made the DPRK one of the most advanced industrial states of Asia. But Burchett points out that there are good Korean words employed to this end: one is *Chollima*, the name of the flying horse of ancient

Korean legend, who could carry people a thousand *li* a day toward the land of happiness. It was with the speed of *Chollima* that the land was rebuilt. Another is *juche*, literally, "theme, principle," first outlined by Kim Il Sung, which might be defined as doing things in a Korean way.

Premier Kim Il Sung emphasized, in defining the term *juche*, that Korea was building its own revolution. "Some advocate the Soviet way and others the Chinese, but is it not high time to work out our own?" (December, 1955.) Just as in the case of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, statements like these threw Western anti-Communist "experts" into a turmoil trying to decide whether "Pyongyang" was in the grip of "Moscow" or "Peking." The most obvious answer was politically unthinkable for them (so they didn't think it).

Nonetheless, there is a part of Korea still in the grip of foreigners, and Burchett's coverage of General Pak Hung Ji's "Republic of Korea" is one of the most interesting parts of his book. General Pak, who likes to call himself "Park" for some reason, is a former Japanese agent who took part in many anti-guerrilla actions (perhaps against Kim Il Sung who led the Korean guerillas for decades) in the service of his Japanese masters. The present reviewer, when reading this, came to the disgusting conclusion that one of the goals of "Washington" seems to be to put in power every Quisling who ever strutted about

on the end of a Nazi or Japanese leash.

Perhaps with good reason, for a man who sells out his country once, will certainly not be too reluctant to do so again. And in this particular instance, not only the country is being sold. Today, one of South Korea's main experts is South Koreans, who work as contract laborers all over the world. This is in addition to the 50,000 South Korean mercenaries fighting in South Vietnam. One of South Korea's biggest problems is unemployment, despite the more than 500,000 men General Pak keeps under arms and the 300,000 spies paid by the state.

U.S. firms have been quick to move into South Korea, taking advantage of its (literally) starvation wages. Motorola has a new \$7.5 million electronics components plant, and plans are well under way for a \$250 million petrochemical complex to be set up near Unsan, South Korea, by a combine of Union Oil, Gulf, Caltex, Skelly, Dow Chemical, Allied Chemical and Union Carbide. All U.S. investments in South Korea are exempt from the recent Johnson administration controls and, like in South Vietnam, have a U.S. guarantee against war damage.

Since 1953, South Korea has received \$5 billion in U.S. military aid, but only recently, because of General Park's sabre-rattling on the Armistice Line, an extra \$100 million was granted to him to modernize his armed forces: these are, it seems, badly-equipped. Eco-

nomie aid since the end of the Korean war has totalled over \$3 billion, yet the per capita income in South Korea is barely \$107 annually; South Korea has changed from a food-exporting to a food-importing country, and is now receiving loans from its former overlords, the Japanese capitalists.

Someday, someone is going to ask where all that money went, and if he is not assassinated before-hand, he will eventually find that most of it went right back into the U.S. defense industry, or financed the rise of the Japanese *zaibatsu* monopolies from defeat (they made \$2.5 billion on the Korean war), or that it provided the working capital for gambling dens, houses of prostitution, and part of the international narcotics trade. This is distinct from just plain stealing, which reached epic proportions in South Korea.

The DPRK was devastated by war, but it was not looted and plundered for years thereafter by rapacious American capitalists and military officers. Its young men and women were proud of being Korean, learned of their ancient culture in the DPRK's schools and universities, and took part in creating a strong, self-reliant revolutionary Korea. In the south, the hungry, uneducated young Koreans became pimps and prostitutes for the Americans. Even T. Fehrenbach, in his racist, fascist, book *This Kind of War* (New York, 1964), says: "... Orphan children, with running sores, lay in the streets. Society, with

the iron Japanese hand gone, was in dissolution. Money was worthless. . . . Women and children fell beside the roads, and died. . . . Korean girls ran up and down the barracks at night, and everybody made black-market deals" (pp. 31-34).

The contrast between the two Koreas is well brought out in Burchett's book, which is written with exceptional clarity, depth and timeliness. This reviewer could not repress a shudder, as if

struck by an icy wind, when reading Burchett's account. The names, half-forgotten, of places where 33,000 Americans were sacrificed — Chonjin Reservoir, Bloody Ridge, Heartbreak Ridge, the Punchbowl—brought back images of stunned, freezing, abandoned American soldiers, stupidly arrogant American generals, and fatuous American politicians—the image of the crucifixion of a generation who did not protest, and did not know why they died.

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