

By JAMES ALLEN

(Conclusion)

MAX WEISS claims justification for his position on two grounds. The first is, that our democratic heritage, especially the right of dissent, will be a central determining factor.

To be sure, we have a rich democratic tradition, established as a result of two great revolutions and the unceasing struggles of labor and the people against entrenched wealth and privilege. This will greatly influence the transition to socialism at all stages, and will also be expressed in the socialist government and institutions. The right of dissent will probably be widely exercised, perhaps within a multi-party system. But this does not mean that the American working class and the mass of people would permit any attempt to restore capitalism.

The second reason advanced by Max Weiss is the assumption that by the time this country turns to socialism, the rest of the

Civil Liberties and Socialism

world will already be there or on its way. Accordingly, we will not be faced by the danger of capitalist intervention, as was and is the condition in present-day socialist countries. Together with this, Max Weiss also assumes that the political struggle for people's power and the transition to socialism in this country will take place in a world at peace.

True, if things turn out according to this blueprint, there is some possibility that our Socialist government could deal with the last global big capitalists rather mildly. But this is a very Big IF. I would be willing to concede the point easily if we were discussing Switzerland or the Kingdom of Monaco. Right now, in economic and military power, the U.S. represents half the capitalist world—and that is quite a different

matter. Here, the big capitalists, even under the circumstances imagined by Weiss, may find it quite worthwhile to fight for "capitalism in a single country."

CERTAINLY, all the forces making for peace in the world have been greatly strengthened, and the prospects of assuring peace are growing. But the condition of enduring peace in the world, and of democratic advance at home, still have to be won and assured by the people. We must stop the present continuing efforts of monopoly to militarize the state, and to continue interventionist policies. The danger of fascism in this country is not eliminated.

If the outcome of these struggles is positive, if we succeed in preventing war and intervention, and in keeping the doors

open to democratic advance, we will certainly have much better prospects for realizing the least painful transition to socialism. The concrete possibilities for a peaceful transition in this country still have to be assured.

History has provided no example of a ruling class surrendering power voluntarily, no matter how democratic or overwhelming the demand for a change. It is possible that history may yet provide such an example, under completely new circumstances. But we cannot depend upon assumptions and speculations about what the future may bring, under ideal conditions, as a guide to present perspectives and program. This borders on fantasy, disorients the entire Left, and dulls the will to struggle. Marxism teaches us to base ourselves upon the

experiences of history, and the evidence of real life.

IT IS GOOD that we are critically examining all established positions. The examination itself, should proceed on Marxist grounds, and not get lost in the stratosphere. Correct positions which are capable of influencing events and human action must be close to present reality. Such positions must necessarily evolve as a result of the conflict of ideas. Let that conflict go on. I hope it will lead to a sharp break with dogma and sectarianism, today the main obstacle to the advance of the Left.

But we must also guarantee that the outcome will not be a swing far to the sectarianism of the Right, isolating us from the real and broad popular struggles of today and tomorrow. We need a position that can unify the Left, including the Communists themselves, and help inspire a new upsurge of the mass progressive movement in America.