

The American Road to Socialism

A Special Section Devoted to Discussion of the Past and Perspectives of the Communist Party, U.S.A. and the American Left . . . Edited by Discussion Committee, Communist Party

Says Nat'l Committee Tailing in Discussion

By FRED FINE

Though the formal discussion initiated by the last meeting of our National Committee is only a few weeks old, our self-examination has in fact been under way for several years. It could not have been otherwise in face of the developing and acute isolation our Party was suffering and the apparent sterility of many policies and tactics we were pursuing.

The Draft Resolution on the 1952 elections, a number of articles in *Political Affairs* (primarily several authored by John Swift) and the Draft Program of 1954 were all part of the early phase of this mushrooming reappraisal of our policies and style of work. They were a reflection of the growing pressures of the situation in which our Party found itself and also the growing pressures in our own ranks for a turn to policies that associated us with masses and the main currents of American life. There was also a sharp and growing dissatisfaction with various estimates we had made and with the muddled and dogmatic perspectives we held out.

In my opinion, Comrade Dennis' report to the National Committee does not sufficiently recognize the Draft Resolution and Draft Program. It was the first "Stop, Look and Listen" sign our Party had gotten for a long time. And with all its errors and wrong estimates, the Drafts nevertheless helped to focus attention of the Party on the crucial need to re-enter the mass arena and to stay with the people.

MOVED IN RIGHT DIRECTION

The two draft documents, and several of the more important articles by John Swift, etc., suffered from equivocations and inconsistencies, and some of the correct conclusions reached were modified in the final draft or succeeding article. Nevertheless, they moved in the right direction and were therefore helpful.

What was emerging in fact were varying and conflicting estimates and conflicting tactical conclusions, and we were witnessing a developing struggle within the Party for a more correct and effective program and line (hampered considerably by the difficulties of collective discussion in face of the severe attacks to which our Party was subjected and the fact that many of our leading people and Party organizations were dispersed or inoperative).

The fact remains that many conclusions stated in Gene Dennis' report were arrived at in various clubs, in some Party committees, and in coffee klatches, a year ago, two years ago, and in some instances four years ago.

This is not to say that there is unanimity in our Party today, or that all have arrived at the main conclusions of the Dennis report. The discussion in our

Statement of the Committee

Some weeks ago, this Committee announced the opening of a public discussion on the report of Comrades Eugene Dennis, Claude Lightfoot and Max Weiss to the National Committee of the CPUSA and urged the fullest participation of all Party members and organizations.

We print in this issue the first articles that have been received.

The discussion now being initiated is, of course, not entirely new. For some time now, there has been intense debate in the ranks of the Party on all phases of our work. A profound process of re-examination is going on. There are differences of opinion within our ranks on a whole host of questions. There is nothing alarming

about this. For only an open, frank and vigorous discussion in which every member honestly and frankly states his or her position, can guarantee that we will emerge with a stronger party and one more capable of truly serving and advancing the welfare of the American people and the cause of Socialism.

We trust that this discussion will mark a new stage; in that it will help further deepen our understanding of the past, both in its positive and negative features, as well as increasingly bring forth much more thinking with regard to future perspectives.

We urge upon everyone fullest participation in this discussion.

DISCUSSION COMMITTEE
COMMUNIST PARTY

Party today is very uneven—in some quarters far advanced, in some places only in its earliest phases.

Nevertheless, it is becoming rapidly apparent that:

1) The National Committee in some important respects is still tailing the discussions already under way and must rapidly catch up with it and give it more adequate leadership;

2) The overall and inadvertent effect of what is essentially a correct analysis of past estimates and mistakes tended to give the impression that our whole past was one big bankrupt episode, and there are also some views heard that we are politically and spiritually incapable of new initiatives and new advances;

3) The N.C. failed as yet adequately to meet the challenge put by one comrade as follows: We don't only want to know where we've been, but where we're going, and how do we get from where we are to where we're going.

RE-EXAMINATION BY MANY FORCES

The current discussion among members and sympathizers of the CPUSA is not entirely unique nor is it limited to American Communists. The entire thinking world is engaged in a sweeping and probing re-examination and "agonizing reappraisal" of a kind rarely witnessed in human history. This is true in the Socialist countries.

This is true in the capitalist countries of Western Europe among all major political currents, and this is certainly true our own country among the various groupings of the Left, in the progressive and liberal movement as a whole and in the Nation at large. J. Alveraz Del Vayo (*The Nation*, June, 9, 1956), writes as follows:

"Throughout the labor movement and the Left in Europe a critical discussion is taking place which must eventually influence the politics of this continent and of the world scene. The main protagonists are the Socialist and Communist parties, but it in-

volves rank-and-file workers as well as theorists and party leaders. And if the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party is the point of departure for the great debate, other factors play a role as well—not the least the vacuum created by the present world transition from cold war to a curious kind of peace in which disarmament conferences and H-bomb explosions alternate in making headlines."

He reports that among the Communists, "The outward manifestations of Communist unrest in France are the brilliant polemics of the intellectuals. . . . But more important than the verbal thrusts and counter-thrusts by the theorists is the ferment at work in the party cells which shows the depth of the change that has taken place not only in France but in the Communist movement all over Europe."

As regards the Socialists of Western Europe, he writes, "As political entities, the Socialists are still very powerful in Europe. . . . Nevertheless a profound malaise can be detected among the rank and file and among a growing minority of Socialist leaders."

DEBATE IN OUR COUNTRY

In the United States, Dr. Nathan M. Pusey, president of



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Harvard University, stated in his baccalaureate address at Harvard, "There are hardly any areas in human thought today whose protagonists are as confident as to the adequacy of their explanations as their predecessors seemed to be only a short time ago."

We know of the articles by liberals like Milton Mayer and the polemics in *The Reporter* magazine between Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and many others with regard to a program for liberals. We know of the developing re-evaluation by prominent leaders of the Democratic Party, as in Dean Acheson's recent book. And the Carnegie Hall symposium sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation is not the least important of these developments.

Our Own Party's self-critical examination is taking place against this backdrop. It has been sharpened and aggravated by the last ten years of our Party's history in which we have suffered retreats, losses, and growing isolation. And more recently the impact of the 20th Congress of the CPSU and subsequent developments in Socialist countries have loosened some old moorings and put into question some of our most hallowed concepts.

In this vast surging discussion and re-assessment, there are two dangers for our Party. The first and main danger is to see our Party's problems narrowly, introspectively and divorced from this overall ferment and the world situation which has stimulated it. This would end in aridity. A failure to see the magnitude of the problems, the dynamism of the period, that we are in a great transition period in world history and a period of re-alignment in our own country—would mean failing to see the forest for the trees. Any narrow and parochial limitations on the debates, any uneasiness about the scope or vigor of dissent will feed dogmatic attachments to the past as well as encourage open

or covert tendencies to stand-patism.

We can only welcome all efforts to review the estimates of our Party, the program of our Party, our tactics and line, our principles of organization and style of work—as long as it is animated by the paramount concern of how we can best defend the interests of the American working class and popular masses, how to advance our national well-being and the cause of Socialism. Such discussion, to be most useful, will seek not only an ultimate regrouping of all Socialist-minded Americans, but must search out the ways by which our Party can, beginning now, effect such changes in its program and methods as will speed the day of the Socialist regrouping and will make of our Party the most useful contributor in this overall development.

SMASHING ENTIRE PAST

There is another danger—in this writer's opinion, a subordinate one—which should not be ignored—the one which smashes everything in the past and leaves people with 15, 20 and more years of dedicated and selfless devotion to the cause of Socialism and our country's future, with nothing but a feeling of bankruptcy. This simply further disperses the Left. Conceived in negativeism one cannot expect that a new united American Socialist movement with a correct and effective program will spring full-blown from the brow of Jupiter. Wild-swinging tendencies can only repel many who want passionately to make fundamental departures from sectarianism and dogmatism but who, before totally surrendering all past views, want to understand better the new views advanced.

No self-critical re-examination can have much meaning if it does not take as its point of departure and as its frame of reference the interests and needs of our country. Certainly most of us are pretty much agreed that one of the most fundamental and costly of our errors of the past was our divorcement from the mass movement. Will it be more than phrasemongering if we are deeply critical of our past errors along these lines and yet continue it in fact by a type of discussion that moves inward rather than outward? Shall we excoriate sectarianism in the past only to give it sanction in the present?

(Also, something is amiss with a discussion in our Party which simultaneously ignores a new book like Gil Green's *The Enemy Forgotten*,—a valuable contribution to the discussion in our Party and in the country at large, even though written months before the 20th CPSU Congress and our last National Committee meeting. Only Illinois and California have

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Threat to Constitution Comes From Right

By WM. SCHNEIDERMAN

In the discussion now going on in the Party on the National Committee reports, we in the Party leadership, state or National, have a special responsibility to the membership to analyze our errors and explain the reasons for them. This article is only the barest beginning of such an analysis to help open the discussion in California.

When we ask ourselves, why is it that the main characteristic of the Party policies for the years under review was that of sectarianism, I think that one of the major reasons is that we have never fully thought out the special way to apply our theory and line to peculiarly American conditions.

Our Party has made and corrected two big theoretical deviations in its history: Lovestone's theory of "American exceptionalism" in the 20's, and more recently, Browder's theory of the benevolent role of monopoly capital. But this did not negate the necessity to learn how to apply Marxist principles to the special characteristics of the most powerful capitalist country in the world; the failure to do this has intensified our traditional sectarianism from which we have long suffered, and increased our isolation. As a result of this failure, even when we took a generally correct line, we showed the greatest weaknesses in its tactical application.

RESULTS OF IGNORING TRADITIONS

Our ignoring of the role of American traditions and institutions resulted in a number of mistakes both in our political estimates and tactics. For in-

stance, our estimate of the possibility of launching a third party was based on the ferment going on in the Democratic party over the foreign and domestic policies of the Truman Administration.

This ferment was especially evident in California in 1947 and 1948, but the anticipated mass breakaway did not take place; what we overlooked was the powerful hold that the traditional two-party system had on the people. It was especially in our state that we have seen many mass political movements arise and find independent expression within the two-party system, but which did not mature to the point of a mass breakaway and formation of a new party. Had we not ignored this experience, we might not have made the wrong estimate of the situation existing before the 1948 elections, which obviously did not point as yet to a mass third party movement.

Likewise, our National Committee could not have made the estimate it did of the fascist danger in 1951 and since, if it had taken into account the strong democratic traditions and institutions, with all their limitations, of our country and its people.

While it is true that the over-estimation of the speed of fascistization was linked with the belief that war was imminent, it also reflected an under-estimation of the strong democratic roots of the American people, and the difficulties the ruling-class would have to scrap bourgeois democracy in a country like ours. As a result, the National Committee acted as if fascism were already here or just around the corner and this mis-



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take had extremely harmful consequences for the party.

Or take the question of the American road to Socialism. Our party showed initiative and made some positive contributions over the years in refuting the "foreign-agent" slander and the false charge that we advocate force and violence. Our party constitution makes clear that we believe that Socialism will come to the United States by the free choice of the majority of the American people, and no other way. But even here, we did not fully develop why we could adopt this position.

ROLE OF U. S.

CONSTITUTION

We could have pointed to the role of the U. S. Constitution in our country; historically the threat to it has come from the Right, and it was the progressive forces of society in each period which defended its democratic character. There are, of course,

many other factors involved, but we could have made our position more understandable in terms of American history. Had we made this clearer, then it would have been easier to explain to the American people why we believe the American road to Socialism will not follow the Russian path, but can be a constitutional road.

Another example of our failure to take into account specific American conditions is our repeated predictions of an economic crisis that failed to come about. These predictions were based on the assumption that the economic cycle would develop in its familiar classical form, as though nothing had changed since Marx's profound analysis of the workings of the capitalist system, or even since Lenin had further analyzed its modern imperialist stage.

We have made no real analysis of what new factors, both within the American economy and in its relations with the rest of the world, have delayed the anticipated post-war crisis of over-production. The fact is that American production, with all its enormous capacity, has not yet outstripped its market, and we have explained the economic measures which made this possible as temporary props which could not last; but these measures are increasingly being adopted for prolonged periods, and may become more or less permanent features by which American monopoly capital seeks to maintain itself at home, and in competition with its imperialist rivals as well as with the socialist world.

The contradictions of capitalist society remain and even multiply, but we must examine in what way these new factors act

on the operation of economic laws.

On this as on other questions under discussion, we have exhibited the same common weakness in the application of Marxist theory to the American scene, and as a consequence, we have also committed sectarian errors in failing to gear our tactics to the level of understanding of the American workers. This is especially evident when we come to review our mistakes on the Negro question and in the trade union field.

INNER-PARTY DEMOCRACY

But whatever the reason for them, our mistakes would have been uncovered and corrected sooner if we had genuine Party democracy operating at all levels of the party, and if we had followed the practice of testing our policies in action, reviewing them periodically, and changing them if experience demanded it. There were times when security reasons made the practice of collective leadership and Party democracy extremely difficult; but at no time can we say that it was impossible to achieve this objective, even when the Party was under severest attack.

Our state and national leadership is justified under the severest criticism for its responsibility in this situation. We need an overhauling of long-standing practices in our methods of work, and to re-open the channels of Party discussion, criticism and self-criticism, as a normal function of the party, and not an extraordinary special event which comes around when there is a crisis. In the long run, we will have more unity and more understanding, and as a result a more effective party of the American working people.

Work Among Negroes Suffered From Left Sectarianism

By HOWARD JOHNSON

Frank debate of diverse positions, the self-critical character and the direction of Dennis' report and the discussions were the three standout features of the National Committee meeting to me.

The general conclusion that the main errors in our policies for the past ten years were of a vanguardist, or sectarian character are doubly true in our work in the Negro people's movement.

We took mechanical, dogmatic and sometimes artificially contrived estimates and policies on the general American scene and proceeded to mechanically, dogmatically or artificially paste them on to the Negro people's movement.

As a result, prestige, respect and mass influence that our movement had acquired among the Negro people has been whittled away to its lowest ebb in decades.

I was among those who shared fully in the execution of these policies as well as in the formulation of some of them.

Without going into the specifics of a number of policies, which must be done if our re-examination is to have depth, I would list a number of areas where our past general policy or estimates appears to me to-

day, unsound and harmful.

ATTITUDE TO CLASSES

1. While supporting the idea of all-class unity, we conceived of its achievement through the Negro workers winning hegemony over the Negro liberation movement and in the long run ousting the business and middle class forces from leadership, except for individuals who supported a working class outlook. In a word, we had an outlook that the clash of class antagonisms between the Negro middle and bourgeois class and the Negro workers was dominant and permanent. The harmony of interest of the various classes among the Negro people in opposition to Jim Crow, we regarded as subordinate and temporary.

This estimate was wrong and could only, and did influence a narrow, partisan and factional approach to the Negro people's movement. Our approach must base itself on the now more clearly established fact that the present day Negro movement is based, as Reddick observes about Montgomery, on "interdenominational, interclass integration," a unity of natural allies from all classes in which leadership is shared.

FOREIGN POLICY

MADE CENTRAL

2. We made foreign policy the central issue before the Negro movement rather than the civil rights issue. Life is showing that the civil rights issue, as long as Jim Crow's wings throw a shadow across America, was and will continue to be the dominant issue in Negro life.

We failed to see the civil rights issue as a major contribution to peace. Many times we gave the impression we only supported civil rights struggles which were led by those who agreed with us on foreign policy.

We denounced Negro leaders



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in the NAACP, National Council of Negro Women, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters as Uncle Toms, betrayers of the Negro people, agents of Wall Street and even went so far as to include the Brooklyn Dodgers. This fed thinking that we regarded civil rights as secondary matters.

3. With our estimate that fascism was around the corner, we exaggerated the strength and influence of the Klan and the Dixiecrats as well as their ideology, white supremacy, among the white masses. We made mechanical analogies between the German Jew and the U. S. Negro.

This fed tendencies in our own ranks to underestimate gains in unity of Negro and white as well as the fighting capacities of the Negro people's movement in the South.

In this respect we lagged far behind the leadership of the established organizations who at the height of the Korean war and McCarthyism projected the

slogan of confidence and optimism, "Free by '63".

DOCTRINAIRE APPROACH

4. Our rigid and doctrinaire approach to an economic crisis was translated in some periods to mean that jobs were the central and key issue in Negro life. At the same time the Negro people's movement was raising, as the central issues, desegregation in schools and housing or other issues though not ceasing activity on behalf of Negro employment.

5. Our faulty economic estimate led to wrong policies in the trade union field reflected particularly in our support to the ill-fated Negro Labor Council. It started off with the handicap of being considered a divisive force and resulted in the isolation of scores of outstanding Negro trade union militants with a large number now cut off from the labor movement altogether.

6. All of these estimates in policies had a decisive influence on our evaluation of present day Negro leadership. We set up the yardstick of pro-war or pro-peace and everyone who did not speak up against the invasion of Korea became a "reformist," "opportunist," "social democrat," "nationalist," or "Uncle Tom." We did not visualize unity by anyone in the final analysis unless they were influenced with a Marxist outlook or were moving in that direction. Sometimes we were edgy about non-party Marxists. Surely, today new assessments must be made of leaders like A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, Ralph Bunche, Adam Clayton Powell and others if our past narrow policy is to be fully scrapped.

MUST STUDY PAST

7. A reevaluation should go back beyond 1946. We should study such developments as the split in the National Negro Congress in 1940 over the non-aggression pact, the effect of our rejection of the Pittsburgh

Courier's Double-V campaign, and the early attitude we took to the March-on-Washington.

Such an examination would reveal how deep-rooted and enduring sectarian outlooks have dominated our movement, even when we were committing the most vulgar right opportunist errors.

For the above reasons a major battle, what I would consider "a crash program against left sectarianism" educative, persuasive and convincing is a most vital need if our movement is to regain its mass ties with the Negro people.

This cannot be the sole remedy. Present discussion points to questions of larger scope than the left sectarianism which shackles our movement. The influence of Stalinist thought covering a gamut of distortions of Marxism on policy and theoretical questions deserves deep study. Our past concepts of left sectarianism do not cover these problems in the Negro field or other areas of work. The extent to which we substituted Stalinist homiletics for the Marxist dialectic method demands major reappraisal. I hope to throw some of my reactions on this score and also on the subject of white chauvinism and the struggle for Negro rights into another letter, if second rounds are not limited by space problems.



Upholds Duty to Criticize Fraternal Parties

By STEVE NELSON

The 20th Congress brought out a great many positive achievements in the Soviet Union. On the basis of the development of this once backward country into one of the most modern industrial nations in the world, the Congress was able to project the 6th five-year Plan, which is even more far-reaching than the preceding ones. Despite attempts by the imperialists to isolate the Soviet Union, it has emerged as a great force, allied with many nations, which though based on different economies and forms of government, have become allies in the fight for peace and security, and for the well-being of all peoples.

These important achievements, which even the most vicious anti-Sovietees cannot deny, must not obscure the fact that grave crimes and mistakes were revealed in Soviet life. These revelations demand of every thinking person, and especially of every advocate of Socialism, to think most deeply about these events and their significance.

In the past, early Marxist thinkers, while working out what Socialism would offer in an economic sense, and how much superior it would be to capitalism, could not work out in all details how a Socialist society would function in an economic, administrative, and political sense. Only general outlines could be worked out, in their time.

The establishment of Socialism in the USSR confirmed the basic theoretical conclusions of Marxists that a Socialist system is more rational, can offer more to mankind's security, than capitalism.

The rapid growth of the USSR has proved this point conclusively. They have solved the problem of crisis, of over-production, of unemployment and insecurity. This tremendous economic and pioneering effort in the USSR was hailed by all supporters of Socialism enthusiastically. But very little attention was paid to the other side of life in the Soviet Union, which only now is receiving serious attention.

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

It is a fact that man does not live by bread alone; that there are needs as important as food itself to make full life. The question of relations of man to man; man to society; his political, legal, social, collective, and individual rights. His access to the best education; conquest of science, art and culture, are as important as economic security.

Undoubtedly, the USSR and the world Marxist movement is at a turning point, and is taking the blinders off from the previous single track approach; of seeing only the economic and scientific advance of Socialism, while failing to pay attention to the mistakes and crimes which brought harm to the development of Socialism.

It is our duty to assess these weaknesses in the course of this pre-convention discussion and draw conclusions from them.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THESE MISTAKES

1. The Party and the government of the USSR, have become a personal dictatorship of an individual.

2. Under this dictatorship, Socialist democracy almost vanished, democratic centralism having become a cover-up for bureaucracy.

3. Criticism of leaders of the government and the Party became unknown.

4. Laws and courts were supplanted by arbitrary police rule.

5. Political disagreements led to political purges, reminiscent of some bourgeois revolutions

(French), to the disgust of all advocates of Socialism.

6. Serious errors were committed on the national question, which led to serious mistakes on the Jewish question and on other minorities. This also was the main cause for the break in relations with Yugoslavia.

7. Weaknesses in art and culture, historical writings, and many other fields too numerous to mention here, were revealed by the Congress.

There are Comrades who object to discussing these questions, frankly and sharply. Their attitude is expressed in the statement, "We must see the positive things which came out of the Congress."

Posing the question this way, fails to recognize that the above mentioned crimes took place because errors in the early days of the USSR, were sloughed over and even if noticed, it was urged that they were of secondary importance. The big problem was to defend the first Socialist country; thus the emphasis on the accomplishments, became primary, and mistakes were unnoticed or covered up. This was done, especially, because the enemies of Socialism were bent on destroying it.

Today we have a new situation. There is more than one Socialist country in the world. There are other countries which are allied with Socialist nations, and are its friends and not its enemies. Together they stand as a powerful deterrent to efforts to undermine Socialism; and for real independence of these neutral nations. Thus, today, it is possible to make an objective examination of Socialist countries, including closer examination of weaknesses and wrong policies and errors.

The examination of the serious mistakes in the USSR demand of all believers in Socialism to raise the matter of Socialist relationships to a new stage. Our relationship must be based on criticism and self-criticism between Socialist and Communist Parties of different countries and of one Socialist country to another. There can be neither leaders nor parties who are beyond criticism, and who can abstain from self-criticism, anywhere.

The mistakes in the USSR and similar mistakes in other Socialist countries demand of all believers in Socialism that this new element in our relations becomes our guiding light. It is in this spirit that our convention must make criticism of weaknesses which we still see, but which were barely dealt with by the 20th Congress.

It is inconceivable that after such major mistakes were revealed, that there is not a resolution or a speech at the Congress, nor even a whiff of self-criticism by the leadership of its own errors. In this respect, the Congress made no departure from the previous practices under Stalin. Although the present leaders have been correcting errors for the last three years, they were not concretely spelled out at the 20th Congress.

If these errors were made, then what is wrong with placing them squarely in a self-critical way to show everyone what they were, where they stem from, to what degree one or the other leader was responsible for them, to what degree the collective was responsible, and how they are to be avoided in the future?

SHOULD NOT

DODGE QUESTION

In expressing this thought to a friend, he asked, "Isn't it more important that they are correcting the errors, than to whip themselves by words and resolutions and speeches? And what right do we have to criticize them?" To me, this is simply dodging the question. The view



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type of relations which I think must govern relations between Communists and Socialist parties and nations, should make it the duty of all advocates of Socialism to raise questions, which in their mind, do not square with basic Marxist concepts.

This lack of criticism in the USSR and the CPSU is one important weakness still evident in the CPSU. Laying the responsibility for the errors at the doorstep of the "cult of the individual" and on the "Beria gang" is not sufficient. These are not full explanations. Not every mistake can be blamed on the "cult," and even the existence of the "cult" rests on the responsibility of the present leaders to a greater extent than they recognize. It is evident that many of the mistakes in the USSR during the era of the "cult" stemmed from "policy," and more than one person must have been responsible for these policies.

It appears that the basic factor which gave rise to serious errors now criticized in the USSR stemmed from the wrong estimate by the Party of the character of the class struggle in the USSR. Stalin was the architect of the concept that as the progress toward Socialism advances, the class struggle sharpens in the country.

This theory was accepted by the CPSU leaders. It can be said that most Communists accepted this proposition as valid, and if there were any questions voiced anywhere, they were dismissed because of the feeling that the CPSU leadership, being the only ones who faced this problem in reality, could best answer it. As for us, it was only a theoretical or hypothetical question at best.

After World War II, other countries had to cope with this problem. It was then that this became a practical question in other lands and here new answers were sought and found. Close examination shows that it was this policy which led to the many mistakes and crimes committed which are now generally attributed to the "cult of the individual."

WRONG POLICY

The theory that the class struggle sharpens under Socialism, calls for extermination of the enemy. Thus, the secret police, the legal arm of the government, and the courts, could and did devise frame-ups of people and those who did it even felt justified in doing it.

In such an atmosphere, a political opposition, "if permitted to operate, can join the class enemy"; thus to prevent such an eventuality, it is best to arrest them or even shoot them; and to do it even without a trial. It seems to me, therefore, that this policy of sharpening class struggle, became the basis on which excesses and crimes against the Party were commit-

ted as much as the crass crimes of cultism.

Stalin, who was the architect of this policy, and who began more and more to disregard democratic procedures, gave vent to the worst features of it.

He was surrounded by many zealots who carried his policy out with a vengeance.

By way of illustration, let us cite the example of the Jewish question in the USSR. The mistakes and crimes against the Jewish people arose out of wrong policy. While the sharpest struggle against anti-Semitism was conducted in the USSR from its very inception, there developed what we may call an assimilationist theory, that became the Party's policy on the Jewish question. Because Jewish people could get jobs and play a leading role in industry and government and cultural life as Russians, this theory gained currency as valid. The national aspirations and sympathies with Jews of the world for national statehood were considered reactionary "cosmopolitanism." This sympathy was supposed to be in conflict and hostile to Socialism.

This policy led to the frame-ups of the Jewish doctors, writers, and cultural leaders by the secret police. The "Beria's" took advantage of a "wrong policy." Yet, I fail to see any criticism or admission of error in the speeches of the report of the Congress on this question.

I think we ought to tell the Soviet comrades that it was these mistaken and wrong policies which led to the crimes. They should face up to it. To place blame only on the "cult" and on Beria, is not a full explanation. To this date, the Soviet leaders have not spoken out on what happened on the Jewish question in the USSR, while we get "explanations" from Warsaw. Their silence on this question only compounds the crime. When they examine it, they will find that their policy was wrong on the Jewish question dating back over 20 years.

While the Congress registered important steps in the direction of correcting errors, it's time to tell our Soviet comrades that they stand before the mirror of the world, and that we are interested both in their successes and in their elimination of errors.

We are anxious that they make as few errors as possible. Our criticism of errors does not in the least shake our confidence in Socialism. We know these errors are not a product of Socialism, but rather a remnant of the past society.

NO ENCOURAGEMENT OF CRITICISM

Yet it must be stated that the present Soviet leaders have yet to make a step in the direction of encouraging criticism by the rank and file of its leaders, and that includes the Central Committee, itself. The Central Committee still perpetuates the notion that it is a crime against Socialism to criticize the leadership.

After such serious errors are revealed in the Party, the leadership ought to invite criticism, even if some of it goes "overboard." This leadership ought also to refresh itself with new leaders. This would show that there is a sharp break with the past.

It is not sufficient for the editorial in the Prava to speak about the "Marxist-Leninist leadership of the Central Committee," as proof that the Party is right on all questions. After such serious errors, such editorial comment does not carry weight. Correct action in practice speak louder than words. But because errors revealed were most shocking, there must be a departure on the question of self-criticism by the CPSU leadership.

We are accustomed to seeing such crimes in bourgeois society.

But then we know the rottenness of bourgeois morality. But we did not expect that such crimes would be committed in Socialist lands. In capitalist lands we saw such crimes and fought against them, of course. But that such errors should occur under Socialism; that was literally unbelievable. Yet they occurred. They occurred in the USSR. That is an undisputable fact.

If we had not idolized the USSR, and its leaders, we might have reacted to them more quickly. But with us, there existed a notion that it was not our business to criticize a Party which "had more experience," a Party in power. We hung back and put our uncritical support in its leadership. Now we know that this was wrong. That is the lesson, we must learn from this situation. We must not make the same mistakes again.

DON'T MEET NEEDS

Therefore, let us tell our Russian comrades that certain of their deeds do not square with the demand of the hour. At this juncture, the most important evidence of the old weakness seems to rest in the lack of self-criticism by the leadership of the CPSU. To keep silent on such matters does not help the world struggle for Socialism. Our criticism, even if sharp, is meant to correct errors and thereby to make Socialism more powerful morally and otherwise. Comradely criticism of errors and leaders who make them, does not weaken Socialism. On the contrary, it strengthens it.

If there be leaders who cannot take such criticism, sooner or later, they will bring on the kind of harm reminiscent of Stalin.

Raising the level of criticism to the international arena means that we are facing up to new problems. The addition of more Socialist countries to the lone USSR, inevitably posed this question for us. There can be no true relations between Socialist nations unless they are conducted on the basis of equality.

This means that all questions must be faced up to in the manner that any scientific problem must be tackled—on the basis of facts, discussed on the basis of equality. Some comrades fear that such an attitude—an attitude of "inquiry" and discussions and criticism, will weaken internationalism. The opposite is the truth. Real criticism will lead to true answers to questions, and this will strengthen internationalism.

Today we are not concerned only with the question of how Socialism fares with Capitalism in the fight for bread and peace—that is pretty well established. Now there must develop a new democracy—a new morality—which is inherent in Socialism, but which has been marred by the mistakes now revealed in the USSR. World Communist criticism can and must help in this struggle.

FRED FINE

(Continued from Page 7) shown any appreciation of the value of this book).

REVIEW OF PAST

Let us hasten to add that this is in no way a call to avoid a very necessary and most fundamental re-examination of the past, one which is more far-reaching and total in its depth and breadth than has hitherto taken place. What troubles this writer is that while we are showing flashes of 20-20 hindsight, our discussion is still weak and uncertain as to what lies ahead. Some of this is inevitable and even desirable since everybody is wary of blueprints and pat answers. However, the main fault for this lies in the tardy and inadequate lead given as yet by our National Committee. (To Be Continued next Week)

Can CP Build Broad Socialist Movement?

By PHILADELPHIAN

I believe that the CPUSA faces the most serious crisis in its history. For a number of years, our membership has been falling off and by now has reached the lowest point in two decades. Furthermore, there is amongst the membership a confusion and lack of confidence in the party that go far deeper than anything I have seen in over 20 years of experience in the party.

The reason does not lie in the objective situation, that is certain. Regardless of the weaknesses recently examined in the S.U., it is obvious that socialism is advancing all over the world. Even in this country one can note an increased interest in socialism. There are also the advances in the colonial liberation movement and in the movement of the Negro people in our own country. Furthermore, throughout the world, and in the U.S.A. as well there has been a continued advance in the trade union movement. Finally, there is beginning a re-examination of many questions, both theoretical and programmatic, which will facilitate the movement toward unity amongst various organizations of socialist minded workers.

In plain language, if our party hasn't grown in the midst of this generally favorable situation, it's our own fault. We have been weakened because we became isolated from these people's movements. Not the attacks, but our own isolation is the root cause of our troubles.

While the report does mention some of our errors, I do not think it reflects a sober recognition of how serious is the crisis our party faces and how much damage has been caused by our left-sectarian errors of the last 10 years.

I definitely do not believe in a so-called "balanced" approach to this question of our errors. We have been essentially wrong; and there is no sense trying to console ourselves with some small matters about which we may have been right.

After very serious thought, I am convinced that in a political sense I have completely wasted the last 10 years of my life. I haven't built anything of value

to the workers, I haven't led any mass movements. The only thing I have to show for this time is a number of sad lessons learned. Some of us have had slightly more positive experiences, but the work of all of us has been terribly limited, and narrow.

SO-CALLED 'BALANCE' ON WAR QUESTION

As an example of the so-called "balanced" approach that I disagree with I want to criticize the way the report deals with our position on the war danger. The report says that while there were serious weaknesses in our tactics and some vacillation in our policy, still we started out from an essentially correct estimate of the danger of war.

I disagree with this on two counts. First, the estimate and the policy by themselves meant nothing unless carried into life by proper tactics. But more important than that; I think the estimate was not correct. Our party's estimate was that the ruling circles in this country were hell-bent for an all out war against the socialist world. This estimate was arrived at by a dogmatic interpretation of theories of the crisis of world capitalism and the inevitability of war.

No doubt many amongst the capitalists would have liked to start such a war. But their positions, both political and economic, were not so weak that they were impelled to venture such a desperate gamble. Furthermore, we did not sufficiently assess the effect of general war weariness on the one hand and the colonial liberation movement on the other hand as deterrents against such a war.

It inevitably followed that our line on the danger of fascism was almost alarmist and unreal. I don't take time to develop this thought because of its close relation with the preceding point. However, I must challenge the statement of the report that we made a contribution to the fight against McCarthyism. The fact is, we were completely isolated from the movements which stopped McCarthy, and we certainly didn't give them leadership. The only thing we can take credit for is

the courage of our leaders and members in standing up against the witchhunt. But this was not leadership; this was a very modest contribution to the fight.

How is it that we made the mistakes which the report mentions over a period of years, and yet only now are we starting to look at them seriously? (We did hint around at them a little in the past.) I am certain that it was the 20th Congress that forced these questions to the surface, partly because of the example it gave of self-criticism, partly because of the similarity of some of our errors to some of theirs, but most of all because the character of that congress was such as to stimulate frank and self critical thinking by every communist on the face of this globe.

DOESN'T REFLECT 20th CONGRESS

The second main criticism I would make of the report is that it does not adequately reflect the enormous significance of the 20th Congress for our party and for the socialist and communist movements throughout the world.

The Congress is the most important gathering, I believe, that I have seen in my 25 years in the party. I consider it even more important than the famous 7th World Congress of the C.I.

There are great lessons in this congress for us. First, as a result of the sharp pointing up of errors made by the Soviet party undoubtedly we have broken forever with the idealistic reverence we built up for it over a long period, when we attributed to it an infallibility which cannot exist in real life.

However, we need to be quite clear that they are going to be the leading party of Socialism for a long time and we will continue to have much to learn from them. The flippant criticisms of the Soviet Party which have lately cropped up in the D.W. don't do anybody any good.

Another lesson from this congress is the fight against dogmatism and the development of new theoretical approaches based on reality. This is especially important for the American movement. In the past our party has taken a whole group of theses

from Lenin and Stalin and tried to squeeze them into the American picture with very little adjustment. We must re-examine all these theses, such as the role of the state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the concept of party structure, and others in the light of present day reality. Those concepts that we retain we must translate into American terms; some concepts will have to be altered.

The final lesson from the 20th Congress which I will deal with is the struggle against the cult of the individual. You would think from the report that we don't face that problem. But that is certainly not the case. We do face it. The report mentions bureaucracy. Well, bureaucracy is just the reverse side of the cult of the individual, when you overemphasize the role and importance of leaders, you create bureaucracy and stifle initiative.

FOSTER NOT INFALLIBLE

Let me say here, that having had a very slight contact with Foster I know that he personally is a very warm and modest man. But we absorbed the cult of the individual from the Soviet party and proceeded to surround Foster with an aura of wisdom and ascribed to him qualities of leadership that were way out of balance with the weak position our party found itself in.

Foster has made enormous contributions, but he of course is not infallible. Certainly if our Party has made serious left-sectarian mistakes, Foster, as its chairman, bears a large responsibility. Since the report does not deal with this question, I assume that the National Board has not yet frankly faced it. My firm opinion is that we have had the cult of the individual around Foster and from him on down around other lesser leaders, and the principle of collective leadership has almost died in the process.

The final point I wish to discuss, around which I think the report is inadequate is the whole matter of a working class base and a working class orientation for our party. The great virtue of the CPUSA in the 1930s was its serious struggle to achieve a working class base. This strug-

gle met with some success. The whole atmosphere around the party from top to bottom was a concern about the activities of the workers, a very conscious, organized determination to be a part of the working class.

All that has vanished now; we are not that kind of party today. It seems to me that the report from the National Board should have dealt most seriously with this aspect of the crisis in our party today. Why is it that the National Committee frequently makes urgent decisions to concentrate on industry, but then in life proceeds to deconcentrate away from industry even further? Why is it that workers have become such a small percentage of our membership? Is it because workers have less courage than other people and couldn't stand the attacks? Hardly that.

The reason for all this is that our policies have either been wrong or they have been so abstract that they don't provide even communist workers with concrete guidance for the problems they meet in their union activity.

Our country is unique in one respect; that is, in the enormous size of the working class, in its high degree of organization, both industrially and through the unions and in its great power, both immediate and potential. It ought to be clear that no socialist movement will grow in this country until it takes root in that great working class. Above all other tasks, it should be the task of the National Committee to face and cope with this task of orientating our party back toward the working class. The report does not give any indication of serious concern about this problem.

My remarks are so sharp because I am very worried about the future of this party. I am afraid that unless the National Committee looks back at its work with a much more critical eye, this party will not play much part in the building of a broad socialist movement which I am certain the American working class will begin to develop before very long.

Party Must Examine History Beyond 10-Year Period

By GENE

BRONX, N.Y.C.

The Dennis report itemizes a host of misjudgements, errors as well as good things but there is virtually no analysis of anything. It seems to me to have the short-cut style of Reader's Digest without that magazine's one redeeming feature: brevity. It is particularly dangerous to speak of mistakes in estimating the economic situation in the past without documentation and then toss off generalities for what's ahead without detailing.

Straws in the economic wind are significant when you know the wind. Dennis' report also blurs the Meany-Reuther relationship by an oversimplification of their differences on foreign policy. There's a big hassle over unification which is related to organizing the unorganized as well as trade union political action. I don't know how opposite the Reuther-Meany camps are on some of these questions. I don't want to use the attitude to India as a shibboleth the way we once used the Marshall Plan. I think our General Secretary should go deeper.

GLOSS OVER

EARLY MISTAKES

Dennis' report seems to divide the last ten years into two periods: roughly up until the time most of the national leadership went to jail and then the period

since. The mistakes of the first period are glossed over while the errors of the second period are magnified and the positive features underplayed.

For example: the outstanding contribution of the Draft Program was its contribution to our correct understanding of McCarthyism and how to fight it. If I remember correctly, this was our number one job. But Dennis is critical because the program was not clairvoyant. Some leaders have the ability to foretell what civil liberties will look like under socialism in the U. S. Fortunately, the Drafting Committee for the Program estimated their abilities more modestly and even then made mistakes.

I might also add that I participated in a lot of discussions after the draft was published. I also went to the conference which finalized the program. I don't think that the reports and summaries by Comrades Gannet and Perry accurately reflected the discussions down below. I think the program which emerged was a compromise.

An example of the minimization of errors in the early period was the treatment of the statement that the Party's declaration that the Vinson decision created a new situation was "open to misinterpretation." Quite the contrary, the interpretation by the membership was true. The estimate was wrong. Let us not

blame the membership for mistakes made by the leadership.

MEMBERSHIP LOSS

Another point: it is no secret from anyone that our membership was almost halved in the period 1950-1952. This was no ordinary decline. This was not attributable to objective factors exclusively. This is more than a quantitative drop which Dennis refers to in a general way. But in a report which is supposed to cover ten years—there's no singling out of this and no analysis.

A couple of more points and then I'm through. The "flourishing" of our movement in the 30's was most intimately related to the mass upsurge of the people. We didn't suck it out of our thumbs. Certain objective conditions were present then which are absent today and may continue to be absent in the period immediately ahead of us.

Nevertheless, we treat the present problem in the nadir of our existence as though all we need do is change our posture and a few rules and the world will stand on its head. That's one of the reasons we didn't know when to retreat. We need when we should have hawed. That is why I feel much more analysis is needed.

We frequently set ourselves objectives as though we're capable of anything we're willing to decide upon. Let's be honest.

On lots of things we are a spit in the wind.

ANALYSIS NOT PROVED

I agree with the characterization of sectarianism which is applied to the errors but I don't think the report proves the point. But even accepting this, there's no indication of the way out. We're sectarian because we are isolated and isolated because we're sectarian. Where does this get us? When it comes to moving out on the \$64 question the report plays it very close to the vest.

I think we have to go back a lot more than ten years to, appreciate the fix we're in. I think we have to examine the manner in which we banished Browder (shades of Comrade Stalin and the way the CPSU destroyed elements which disagreed with them) and began to label everything which didn't smack of military discipline as Browderism.

Dennis states in his report that up and down channels have to be opened. He acknowledges the greater isolation of the leadership from the masses than the membership. But this isn't going to be overcome making comrades feel "free" to criticize. That freedom should not be a license or something which is tolerated. Life has proven that the argumentation of those differences is the essence of true

collective leadership.

The discussions of the 20th Congress and our own errors is one more indication. I feel the Dennis report inadequate because discussion among the membership is way ahead of the National Committee.

What disturbs me most of all is that I am certain that national comrades are capable of greater leadership than is being given. Some of the rambling nature of my letter and many other letters arises because the best and most experienced leaders of our movement have not entered into the fray—as individuals. It has not helped matters any that there was unanimity. What were the polemics? Who argued for what position and why? This is what the discussion is sorely lacking.

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