

Letters from Readers



Big To-Do Over MM? Why Not Belafonte?

Dear Editor:

I would like to disagree with Joe North for making such a big to-do and taking up so much precious space concerning Marilyn Monroe and new bridegroom. This is stuff for Hollywood gossip columnists. It is perhaps normal male reaction to drool over the Monroe-Russell dimensions. By the same token it is normal reaction for women to drool over a Harry Belafonte who, unlike these shallow women, is an outstanding artist in the entertainment world, with appeal to men, women and children. Yet how often do we see publicity on him? Rarely, by comparison. Joe, you know better than I, why this is so. The powers that be like it very much when our cultural level is kept down to a sex-appeal level, portraying women as beautiful, but dumb, emphasizing female dimensions on billboards, movies, theatre, TV till it's nauseating. You don't need to contribute to this male supremacy. There are beautiful women everywhere around us with the added attraction of a wholesome personality because of the positive contributions they make to society. So simmer down, Joe, and recognize the facts for what they are.

L. K.

Soviet Leaders Have More to Explain

Dear Editor:

The resolution of the C. C. of the CPSU, as published in the New York Times and the Daily Worker of July 3, is a document of tremendous significance. It reaffirms the advances of the peoples of the Soviet Union and the validity of Marxist-Leninist principles of analysis. It emphasizes the brotherhood of man and the fact that humanity is well on the way to socialism. All this is to the good.

At the same time it betrays gross underestimation of the need for that profound search-



ing of policies and values which has properly been demanded by Marxists the world over. This should be criticized for the common benefit.

We are told in Part I that "the question at issue is a past stage in the life of the Soviet Union," that the CPSU is "firmly overcoming" the evil consequences of the "personality cult." The 20th Congress spoke out "courageously and frankly," says the C. C., and told "the whole truth." The C. C. concludes that its line "found approval and support among the party and people."

The question at issue, unfortunately, is still very much alive wherever men are concerned with socialist morality, which means that it is not a past stage in the life of the USSR. The

(Continued on Page 7)

The American Road to Socialism

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

Were Last Ten Years of Party Wasted? The Answer Lies in What We Do Now

By LILLIAN GATES

WE face such deepgoing questions today, it is hard to decide which subject to tackle. I would like to deal with some questions of approach and outlook now because it seems to me they will determine how far we get in the unprecedented discussion under way.

I believe our approach must be to dig very deeply into all aspects of the past and future including posing questions for which there are no complete answers. For I agree with those who feel that our future hinges on finding some new answers and that failure to do this could lead to the disintegration of the Communist Party and the dispersal of its cadre and membership.

On the top of all the vast problems created by the policies of the last ten years and those involving reappraisal of Stalin and other aspects relating to Socialist development in the Soviet Union, new problems are arising in our ranks. They grow out of profound dissatisfaction which can bring about further loss in confidence. Ideas that we must put a "brake on the discussion," labeling those with questions as being "hopeless and in despair" will not create the atmosphere needed at this critical time. Attempts to bottle up differences in top committees are doomed to failure, because the great tide of independent thinking sweeping us gets into all corners; from every area similar ideas that grow simply out of trying to think problems through are arising.

For example, to take an extreme example: those who feel that the Party should dissolve as an aid to other forces coming forward to form a broader Socialist movement. I personally disagree with this idea; yet it cannot be counteracted by name-calling. What is required is far more vigor and speed, first of all from our national leadership, but also our state and all other leading bodies, in posing for frank discussion the various alternatives in the building of a broader and more effective movement for Socialism.

THERE is another idea that it is impossible for us to find the answer to this question simply from within our own ranks. I agree with this idea, but believe that in such a situation we must start with what can be realized. We can build from this—or prepare the groundwork for future development—provided that we open our minds and keep our hands outstretched for all possible allies. I don't believe this can be done without making some big changes in our own Party, now and at the convention. For these changes are the pre-conditions for establishing even the framework of discussion for a broader movement for Socialism. They are also key to more effective work in the promising situation in the country today in the developing people's coalition.

I also agree that we do have a section of our membership—in some industries and in some people's organizations—who have maintained ties (and some, because of the struggle conducted since 1952, who have established ties) and are in a po-

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

In this issue we continue to print 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

Statement of the Committee

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 feature, as well as increasingly bring forth much more thinking with regard to future perspectives.

We urge upon everyone full participation in this discussion.

DISCUSSION COMMITTEE
COMMUNIST PARTY



LILLIAN GATES

sition to influence events. We should certainly not abandon a single post of influence we have despite the very heavy pressure of the present discussions.

Nonetheless, it seems to me that unless we set out to squeeze every lesson we can from our experience of the last decade and from the very inception of the Communist movement in this country, we will fail in drawing the lessons from the past that can help to change the future.

In this connection, I disagree with those who feel that a sharply critical appraisal of the last ten years (especially the period prior to the 1952 resolution) is a negative approach which will demoralize our members.

The answer to the question about whether or not the last ten years were wasted, in addition to all the positive things we have done, basically is being determined in the course of this discussion. Historically speaking, it is out of such stuff—experiences and learning from them—that Marxists are molded and effective Communist movements built. But this is not an automatic process. To try to gloss over errors on the grounds that we also had achievements is the surest way of wasting the valuable means whereby Marxists can improve themselves. It would indeed be tragic if we should fritter away the maturity that could come by boldly facing up to our errors and setting out to make the necessary changes.

THUS I feel that it is completely missing the point to pose, as some have done, the question as being one of how to root ourselves among the American workers—and then go on to say that a sharply critical discussion hinders this. It is true that the heart and center of any

effective movement for Socialism must be the American workers. But how are we to root ourselves among the American workers—if we don't learn from the lessons of the past? Did we help this by supporting the formation of the Progressive Party in 1948? Did we establish roots or uproot people in many of the activities we forced on our members in the shops with the rigid attitude on the Marshall Plan, the way in which we placed the war danger and the fight for peace, separated from the immediate needs and interests of the workers?

Did we not further sever our ties from the very inception of our movement with a narrow approach to various labor and Social-Democratic trends, with our labeling of them as warmongers, reformists, sell-out artists, etc.? Is not the basic lesson to be learned—how to maintain ties with the masses, even under very difficult and adverse conditions—worthy of the closest study? And haven't our experiences demonstrated that it is possible to maintain our contacts with the masses without sacrificing principle? Haven't we been obsessed with the fear that in the reactionary environment in the United States it was impossible to reconcile both?

Precisely because we have such a large and varied working class, with its own features not sufficiently studied and mastered, we must take a fresh look, based on past experiences and the big changes in the world of today. Then we can learn how to root ourselves. If we go back to the period of the '30's and '40's, when a growth did take place among the workers, we find that even here tens of thousands joined—only to leave in very short order. Even very favorable objective conditions could not save us from the cost of rigid concepts of organizations, sectarian practices and policy difficulties (such as the tactics pursued in the Nazi-Soviet pact period).

LIKE all other sincere adherents of Socialism—which I believe includes all our members, regardless of differences—I don't want to waste my time either. More than that, I feel a deep personal sense of responsibility for examination of my own work and for speaking out for what I believe to be correct. In the past it was not possible to do this. Our application of democratic centralism bottled up differences—and I don't want to give the impression that there were not plenty of personal, sectarian and bureaucratic errors. There were. But today there is

no excuse for any of us to conceal or hold back our real views, let the chips fall where they may.

Our re-examination has been going on for some years. In my opinion, it was hampered by two major problems: first, the lack of agreement and hesitations in our national leadership on the policy questions discussed in the Dennis and Schrank reports. There was hesitation and resistance on the part of some to come to grips with the basic changes that had to be made in our policy. I think that the Schrank report deals with this more fully and correctly than was indicated in the Dennis report.

We had many reports in the state after 1952, given the assistance and impetus of the national resolution on the elections, calling for a change in our peace, Negro and electoral work, our approach to American traditions, and trade union work. These reports were subjected to the sharpest criticisms by a section of the national leadership and some other individuals in the state and regions. It is now recognized that most of this criticism was incorrect.

WHILE this struggle was a contribution, both in the state and national leaderships, a policy was followed by keeping these differences within the higher bodies. Thus today it is understandable that our membership does not know that such struggles on policy went on.

Today a similar situation exists in that the basic ideas are still not being presented frankly and fully enough to our entire membership. The Schrank report, which attempted to summarize these differences as they developed at the National Committee meeting, has been under heavy criticism for having gone "too far." I don't believe that this is the way in which basic questions of policy can best be debated and deepened by our leadership and membership.

We must be very concerned with conducting our discussions in a spirit of seeking to retain all our members; this is one of the lessons I am trying to learn and master. We must make clear that we have a common goal of how to advance the cause of Socialism, not to destroy or undermine it. But wrong concepts can best be corrected in the course of full discussion; let us not stifle this discussion in its infancy. Far more important is to place in the center of the discussion the fact that it is fundamental questions of policy which will de-

(Continued on Page 10)

The American Road to Socialism

We Must Embody the Democratic Heritage

By CARL HIRSCH
CHICAGO.



THE ideological crisis in our movement today finds many of us perplexed and groping, seeking a new grip on perspectives which have become lost or blurred. The goal of socialism in America suddenly seems more remote as we realize the extent to which socialism in general has become stigmatized by the practices rampant under the Stalin regime. The sense of building the future, which once enriched our day-to-day work, has been dimmed as we face the awful reality of our isolation and our lack of prestige among the American working class and the American people.

We have not lost confidence that time and struggle will certainly help develop socialist aspirations among the American people. Socialism will unquestionably emerge as the great "problem-solver" of this historic era, with a rich appeal for the practical-minded American people as the answer to the most fundamental problems which they face, now and in the future.

There will eventually be a clearer understanding which separates the great advance of mankind under socialism from those anti-socialist currents which may arise within it, including bureaucracy and tyranny. There remains in our movement a great bedrock of faith in socialism based on understanding and confidence in a socialist future.

★

MUCH LESS clear and much more disturbing is the question of our own role as a party in the American struggle toward socialist goals. This problem is being discussed today in terms of a possible regrouping of socialist organizations. Such efforts should be pursued. However, it should be remembered that most

of these socialist groups are small sects, beset by problems of isolation as great or greater than our own.

Secondly, a half-century of bitter polemical warfare has erected barriers between these socialist groups, and between them and us, which may prove harder to eliminate than we realize. The least, isolated of these groups consider themselves as being in the camp of "democratic socialism." We are barred on two counts. First, our alleged subservience to foreign political discipline. Secondly, our lack of inner-party democracy.

While seeking unity with the conscious socialist forces, there is the more important question of our relationship to those millions of Americans who are not yet "socialist-minded," but who are being propelled by events toward socialism. Who and where are they? They are to be found wherever people have

problems which are insoluble under capitalism. They are to be found among those who have joined in struggles for even limited goals which this social order will not allow them to achieve. The general tendency of this system is to mass-produce these crises and frustrations among the people at an ever-increasing rate.

★

THE BIG question of perspective for us today is whether we are moving toward acceptability by the masses who will be seeking socialism. Are we becoming more eligible for leadership in this field, either alone or with others? Are we moving rapidly enough to divest ourselves of the obstacles between us and left-moving Americans?

Brutal attacks have been levelled against our party. But somehow we have accepted the "principle" that such attacks necessarily lead to isolation and to the shrinkage of our ranks and our influence. This reasoning has blurred our recognition of this tragic fact: that there has been growing hostility toward us not only from the class enemies of socialism, but from countless Americans who should be our friends and allies!

We face this problem: how to refashion our party in the American image. The deeper aspects of this problem have to do with our program, our roots among the American working class and the American people, our record of struggle. But even these decisive questions are linked up with matters of our democratic structure, our style of work, our methods of choosing policy and leadership.

★

THE BRAND of democracy practiced in our party has a great many defects. And most serious are the inadequate means for securing the necessary periodic reviewing and refreshing of policy, the lack of an atmosphere which would make

it possible to secure a constant creative testing and discussion of policy and leadership which would provide us with some safety against error.

Our party does not yet have a typically American form, one in which the average American could find himself "at home." Certainly, the attacks on our party have to some extent hampered our working in the most democratic manner. But it is fair to say that neither now nor in the past have we practiced democracy to the full extent that conditions allowed.

We have a need to make a searching study of American democratic forms and methods. We need to examine the democratic mass organizations in American life to find what we can profitably adopt or emulate. (And this does not discount the fact that many anti-democratic practices will be found in many trade unions and liberal organizations.)

But where vigorous democratic practices flourish, there we will find guidance in reshaping our party. Many of these practices will seem strange to us, unnecessarily cumbersome, involved, argumentative, time-consuming. However, these are the "necessary evils" involved in the democratic process. And we must recognize that our tendency to expedite, streamline, to act in a decisive and efficient manner often becomes a cloak for bureaucracy.

There is no contradiction between our remaining true to our Marxist goals and becoming a model democratic organization. Quite the contrary, a deep-going and creative brand of democracy is inherent in our Marxist science and in our approach to the masses. Moreover, our efforts at leading the American masses in struggle toward socialist goals will be thwarted to the extent that we fail to embody the democratic heritage which the American people hold so dear.

Letters from Readers

(Continued from Page 6)

claim to the contrary, indeed, betokens a complacency deserving sharp condemnation.

Have they "firmly overcome" all the evil consequences? What about the executions in Georgia recently, announced many weeks after the event, with no public trial or publication of evidence? . . . Did the C. C. tell the "whole truth" about Stalin? It certainly did not, inasmuch as the outstanding document has circulated only because imperialist intelligence agents got hold of it! Whether or not the party and people have given "full approval" we don't know. We have no facts on the subject independent of the C. C.'s own statements.

Part II "explains" why so little was done before. There is much self-congratulation by the "Leninist core" of the C. C., presumably the present Political Bureau, who "immediately after the death of Stalin set a course of struggle." Notice the "after." Note also the desperate grasping for straws of examples of how this core had "sharply



restricted" individual acts of Stalin during the war. Undoubtedly many a commander at front or factory rear "made independent decisions"; they could never have won without it. But that does not prove a thing about a struggle for democracy against the Stalin terror!

Beria is referred to as "the agent of international imperialism." Maybe he was. Maybe he wasn't. Who knows? What evidence has he seen? Let the C. C., CPSU, understand that we who fight for socialism, who have the utmost respect for the peoples of the USSR, are not taking anyone's unsupported word on so vital a matter.

That holds also for the claim that Soviet democracy both proclaims and insures materially "freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of conscience." Such a claim can be accepted when samples of the published product are available. Until then, it is a welcome, hope-inspiring announcement, but only that.

And the \$64 question? The "answer" seems to be that everybody loved Stalin and you couldn't challenge him, for lack of mass support. This answer does not show much confidence in the masses; it says in effect that they believed everything they were told by and about The Great Man.

Furthermore, it ignores the passing admission made earlier in the resolution. The irregularity of meetings gets a once-over lightly. Furtseva, too, said, how could they meet in war time. Rubbish. Time of crisis is above all a time for C. C. meetings as complete as possible. That is one thing, perhaps the only one, emphasized by Lenin, that they are not now trumpeting in the resolution. Did no one in that Leninist core ever ask for the regular meetings prescribed by the Party Constitution—in all those years since the prewar Convention? Could there have been a safer way of raising the curtain on potentially embarrassing discussion? And the lower bodies, the contact points with the masses, did they never ask either? How come this aspect of party consciousness, was so generally suffocated?

Part III reminds us that no one individual could change the

(Continued on Page 10)

The Essence of Our Errors—Bureaucracy

By C. E. W.

UNION COUNTY, N. J.

MY INCLINATION is to preface these remarks, which are my small contribution to the series of discussions now taking place in our party, with an elaborate exposition of the tremendous contributions our organization, the Communist Party of the U. S., has made to the American scene. Suffice it to say that while the majority of what I will say is critical, I remain firmly convinced that only our party is capable of eventually leading the American people to a Socialist United States which will be able to provide a life exceeding in grandeur anything Edward Bellamy imagined possible!

I am likewise convinced that in the not too distant future the American people will recognize the tremendous courage and enormous personal sacrifices so many of our comrades have made and are prepared to make in order to build such an America. Here I refer not only to the leaders of our party who have spent years in jail or away from home, but also to those many comrades who have given up personal comforts and ambitions in order to carry forward the struggle in mass organizations, in trade unions and in community life.

In the main, I would like to deal with what I believe to be the essence of our errors . . . bureaucracy. Dennis, in his report to the National Committee characterizes the errors made in

the last 10 years as being mainly of a left-sectarian nature. However, while I fully agree with this I do not believe that he gets to what I consider the heart of the matter and that is not what type of error was made . . . nor even how it was that the error was made at all . . . BUT, how it was that the errors were perpetuated "ad nauseum."

WHAT KIND OF BUREAUCRACY

I will attempt to show how I arrived at my conclusion that bureaucracy is at the heart of many of our problems. But, first, let me make clear that I do not speak of the type of bureaucracy which exists in a government office . . . that is, the "9 to 5" desk type. I do not think that we are confronted with this type of bureaucrat and I am very much of the opinion that we will not be until such time as the Communist Party becomes a governing party. When I speak of bureaucracy I refer to that type which has so invaded the minds of most of our leading comrades, from club organizers up, that policy and line, strategy and tactics, are not adjusted and corrected in accord with actual conditions until all too many of our comrades have become isolated from the American people.

(1) The Inevitability of War—It is undoubtedly true that our party began to see before most other parties, even those in Socialist states, that war was not inevitable. But, our approach to the problem was in my opinion, naive and even foolish.

I remember discussions in which the line was laid down that in accordance with Marxist-Leninist theory war under capitalism was inevitable but that given the struggle of the people for peace, any given war was not inevitable. With this line, for any comrade to really be convinced that war was not an immediate prospect he had first be convinced that the people of the U. S. were struggling against war and for peace! Obviously this was not the case through much of the past 10 years and the result was that while parroting the official line I, with most comrades I was in contact with, believed surely that any day would bring war.

RESULTS WERE TACTICAL ERRORS

This had the effect of leading us into many tactical errors in our day to day handling of problems relating to peace. That the error was made is not in itself startling. That the error was not seen after years of questions in one form or another is certainly serious. The lack of understanding of the line laid down should have led much more rapidly than it did to a re-evaluation of the line itself!

(2) The Peaceful Transition to Socialism—Here, similarly in many ways to the previous question, our party laid down the line that it was possible to proceed peacefully to Socialism if only the bourgeoisie would not react violently . . . certainly we, the party, the people we hoped to lead would not be the ones to use force and violence first. With

this line, in order to believe that a peaceful transition was possible, it was obviously necessary to be certain that the bourgeoisie would not react violently. I, with numerous others I am sure, was positive that the bourgeoisie would fight and therefore, in my mind the whole line became sterile and meaningless! Again, this question was raised time and time again and the line was clearly not understood by many, many rank and file comrades. Yet, the questioning and unclarity was not for many years related to a possible incorrect line.

SELF-DETERMINATION

(3) Self-Determination of the Negro People—Here I only wish to ask the questions, how many comrades raised the demand for self-determination in their trade unions or mass organizations? How many comrades raise it even with people friendly to the movement? Must we not learn that our policies which for years are resisted by thousands of comrades to the point of ignoring them entirely outside of party clubs themselves, need reconsideration?

Are we so conceited and bureaucratic in our thinking that we can automatically ascribe this type of resistance to policy either to right opportunism of our comrades or to lack of understanding of the masses without even having the modesty to at least re-examine our line? Trade union comrades, in particular, will remember the prodding for their party organizations to raise the demand for super-seniority.

(Continued on Page 10)

Letters from Readers

(Continued from Page 7)

nature of Soviet society, and that it is basically the most democratic yet devised. That is perfectly true, but not the point.

Our comrades of the C. C., CPSU, are too ready to dismiss the "formal indications" of democracy in favor of phrases like, "whether the political authority services and reflects in action the will and basic interests of the people and workers." This is very vague fare, especially in the light of the events now disclosed. In fact it sounds much like the "general will" and "will of all" in the idealist dreams of J. J. Rousseau. We can see now that, while "the nature of the socio-political regime is determined" by the mode of production and which class holds political power, only a general sort of "nature" is thus "determined." We want to know why party life was at so low an ebb that for twenty-odd years there was no legislative debate, no cultural freedom, no safety in dissent.

The task of the epoch is indeed to consolidate socialism into a world system, with the CPSU in an honored place. Let the C. C. dig deeper and think harder. The moral standing of every Party depends a good deal on it.

STANLEY ARCHER.

A Defense of Our Egg-Heads

NEW YORK

Dear Editor:

In my time I have run a lathe, served on grievance committees and been elected to office in a local union of 5,000 members. But since I have a college degree and have for some years made my living as a musician and teacher, I guess that makes me an "intellectual" in good standing.

As such I want to take issue with several of your correspondents—notably the recent one from North Carolina—who claim



that it is "intellectuals," particularly in leadership positions, who have loused up the Communist Party.

First, your correspondents seem to take it for granted that workers and intellectuals are two completely separate species. Now it is true that most workers are not intellectuals and most intellectuals are not workers, but it is quite possible for a man to be both—for example, Sean O'Casey.

Second, it is just not true that the CP's leadership is or was composed of intellectuals. Run down the names—Foster, Dennis, Nelson, Thompson, Perry, Onda, Flynn, Gannett—not an intellectual in the lot. Nor, aside from Jerome, Trachtenberg and a handful of others, will you find many no matter where you look. The mistakes made by the CP's leaders were not made by intellectuals—they were made by bureaucrats: people who had forgotten, or never learned, to listen to the rank and file.

Third, where do your correspondents get the idea that "intellectuals" are automatically wrong and workers automatically right? As against Meany, the plumber, Beck the truckdriver, Woll the photoengraver, etc., I'll take the intellectuals Robeson,

(Continued on Page 11)

The American Road to Socialism

Were Last Ten Years of Party Wasted?

(Continued from Page 6)

termine our future; not the weakness of this or that individual, which also is not barred in the discussions, of course. Even the question of bureaucracy and sectarianism are tied up with certain concepts of the Party. Unless they are changed, it is highly likely that we will continue to have a built-in bureaucracy and a built-in sectarianism.

THE second major reason which is, to my way of thinking, the basic one hampering the growth of the Marxist movement in this country was the heavy burden of concepts largely taken over from Russian experiences and dogmatism in the application of Marxist theory. Here, of course, a vast upheaval is taking place all over the world. The 20th Congress has revealed a changed world situation in which past concepts have been openly revised to meet changed conditions. The inevitability of war under imperialism, different paths to Socialism, changes in approaches to Social-Democracy and in relations between Communist Parties are the outstanding "revisions." They prove that Marxism must be revised as changes take place, or it will become a straitjacket, not a guide to action.

In addition, the revelations around Stalin and other questions in the People's Democracies indicate both shocking distortions of Socialist theory and a host of unsolved and complicated problems in the building of Socialism in these countries which require new or modified answers. These problems certainly go far beyond the emergence of the "cult of personality," which, in my opinion, is but one of their reflections. The fact that there are problems in the building of Socialism—some even requiring new an-



swers, some for which answers haven't yet been found—has now fortunately been brought out into the open. This in no way weakens the solid contributions of the Socialist world to humanity—the outstanding one being the possibility of preventing another world war. And, in turn, our Party, in keeping with this changed world situation and the removal of wrong ideas of the infallibility of any individual or group of leaders as well as over-simplified ideas about the building of Socialism, can and must look at the world and our country with fresher eyes.

THERE have been many articles written with which I am in agreement on the general direction such changes should take. They include first and foremost making conditions in America our starting point, realizing that the true national interests of the people of our country are not contradictory to fraternal solidarity with peoples the world over. They include re-examining the structure of the Party and the validity of such ideas as democratic centralism, monolithic party, how the Party exercises (and if it should exercise) its vanguard role, the parliamentary path to Socialism, and civil liberties after Socialism. I believe that these

questions should be discussed one at a time, and I hope to contribute later to that. I also feel that there must be a majority rule in any organization, while the right to dissent is guaranteed within the framework of carrying out policies and programs democratically agreed upon.

But these changes, to whatever degree they are discussed and adopted, will not alone solve our problem of how to build an effective mass movement for Socialism in the United States. We don't have all the answers; indeed, neither we nor others can have them all at this time. The objective conditions are not here for a mass movement for Socialism. In addition, there are many other factors. Even those who are for Socialism in some manner are not prepared for organic unity with us, particularly the most important and decisive individuals and groupings in the trade unions inclined toward radical or socialist ideas.

It is quite possible that it will be a long time before a mass movement for Socialism begins to take shape. All the more reason that we not accept the status quo passively today, but put ourselves in the best position for helping to forward this movement. We must do all we can now to halt the loss of influence and prestige we now suffer. It certainly requires action, not just words. We cannot guarantee a future free of mistakes; we can guarantee, by our deeds in the vital weeks and months ahead, that we have the ability to learn from mistakes—and that would be a great advance!

FINALLY, I believe the following points would, in outline form, be a summary of some ideas on outlook for the future:

1) We need to develop a more correct estimate of forces in our country, develop a far

broader mass policy which will correct past narrow concepts and take a new look at large sections of the labor, Negro people and people's organizations.

2) Basic changes in our structure, name and character which would help to overcome rigid practices and help to lay the foundations for further changes as conditions mature.

3) Continued and renewed emphasis on our ties with the labor and people's organizations and the fight for immediate needs. I believe that the decline of the Socialist Party in the past is due primarily to its neglect of these questions during the last twenty years and that the sectarianism of many other organizations of a more advanced character stems primarily from similar weaknesses. While I haven't the space to get into a discussion of our role fully, it seems to me that any movement for Socialism, any Marxist organization which does not react to the daily needs of the people and workers is doomed to sterility.

We may broaden greatly our ideas of how our members should function in the shops and organizations; but our own program and activity should be expanded, not curtailed. For some years our legislative work has been greatly curtailed; yet the tradition and what little has been done are still one of the most effective means of making contacts and presenting our program. We in fact should be engaged on a real program to meet the transit, school and other needs of the people of our city and state. I hope that this will be picked up after the summer lull.

4) The widest exploration with all sorts of groupings and individuals—with an open mind, with modesty and a real spirit of give-and-take—and especially at this stage, emphasis on the "take."

The Essence of Our Errors—Bureaucracy

(Continued from Page 7)

for Negro workers. In the main, the trade union comrades found one excuse or another for not raising the demand (and those that did raise it found themselves isolated) yet to my knowledge, this resistance to a line of the party never led to a re-evaluation of the line itself!

(4) Election Policies—It appears pretty well agreed upon that the support for the entering of the Progressive Party into the Presidential elections in 1948 was a left-sectarian error. But, it is my conviction, that more important than the error itself was the continued pushing of the line in 1950 and again in 1952 in the face of snowballing opposition from the ranks of our party. We must learn to stop blaming everything on objective conditions and learn to think constantly in terms of our line as well.

(5) The Fight for Peace—Here again I would like to refer to shop comrades who came to meeting after meeting of their party club where they were asked, as a permanent point on the

agenda, "How did you raise the question of peace in your shop this week?" All will remember the resistance to raising the question . . . and certainly all will remember the varied excuses usually related to so-called objective circumstances in the given shop. But, here again, the resistance was not related to our line for many years.

YOUTH PROBLEM

(6) The Youth—Since the formation of the Labor Youth League in 1948 the Party annually reaffirm its belief in the importance of winning the youth to socialism through this independent organization. Nevertheless, far from having grown it has dwindled in size and in influence. We cannot continue to ascribe the failings of the LYL to objective circumstances. A reevaluation of our line in regard to the LYL and to the youth in general is sorely needed and long overdue in my opinion. Once again, here is an example of what I consider to be bureaucratic thinking which has resisted related failings of our line to our line itself!

I have attempted in the above six examples to prove my case that bureaucratic thinking lies at the root of many of our long-continued errors. That we will make errors in the future is as certain as is the correctness of our party's stated approach toward criticism and self-criticism. Were there no errors there would be no need for criticism and self-criticism.

But, just as I am certain we

will make errors in the future, I am also convinced that our party leadership on all levels, must learn to listen in a new way to all our comrades and to all the American people. We must learn to seek out what is really meant in the expressions of disagreement to our line, whether these expressions be vocal and clear or simply in the form of passive resistance. Only in this way can we avoid the perpetuation of errors to the point of isolation of our comrades.

In the six points used as examples above, I have deliberately omitted reference to errors our party made in relation to economic questions. I did so because I wanted to deal separately with what I consider to be not only one of our most serious succession of errors but the source, directly and indirectly of numerous other mistakes.

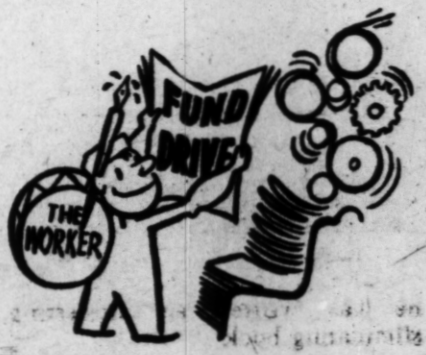
POLITICAL ECONOMY

Some ten years ago a new recruit to our ranks was introduced to political economy by a volume of Leontiev. Five years ago a new recruit would have been presented with Eaton. Clearly we are moving to the West on economic matters . . . but we have yet to cross the Atlantic! How is it that in the one most advanced capitalist country there is not one American Marxist Political Economy textbook?

Can we say that as Marxists we are able to analyze the day-to-day economic events in our country with clarity and relate them concretely to our correct

general line on economics? We cannot! Our incorrect cries of impending crisis on several occasions proved conclusively that as economists we were a long way from being surefooted.

I concur with the resolution of the State Committee of the New Jersey District of our Party calling for an American Marxist Political Economy textbook. It appears to me that the tremendous research necessary to prepare such a book would more than prove its value by developing many real American Marxist economists who would have stature in our country whether the bourgeoisie liked it or not. But, even more important such a task would help insure that much of our tactics and our strategy would be more nearly related to the American scene, and therefore, much less likely to be in error. Such a task would help us come to a better understanding of the ideology of the American working class as it differs from that of the working class in any other country in the world.



Letters from Readers

(Continued from Page 10)

O'Casey and Aragon any day of the week.

Finally, let me suggest that those among your readers who seem to want to join McCarthy's "anti-egghead" crusade might reflect on this fact: of the four most important figures in the history of socialism, three—Marx, Engels and Lenin—were "intellectuals." The one worker was . . . Joseph Stalin.

ALEX LESLIE

Says Smith Act Is Cause for Setbacks

BROOKLYN.

Dear Editor:

While reading letters and articles in the discussion pages I'm coming to a conclusion that the wrong issues are being discussed. Some time ago I read that democracy is the road to socialism, and unless we clear that road, it's a waste to talk and plan on goals. Let's set aside our goals for a while and concentrate all forces to our constitutional right and civil liberties. For there are many who are willing to listen and act, but are scared by the Smith Act, and I repeat that unless we remove that fear, there will be no action from those that are willing to listen and act. While I am on the subject, I want to ask, "Why blame ourselves so much, for our present state?" It seems to me that the Smith Act and our enemies are the main cause.

J. B.



BOOKS

(Continued from Page 8)

stances where he offers no facts to sustain a theory: namely, that banks and bankers have now become a negligible factor.

Mills successfully shows the inter-locking between the corporate rich, the politicians and the generals. He has no trouble pointing to the military who have gone into the upper strata of the big corporations or the extent to which big businessmen have become part of the government since World War II.

★

BUT he does tend to present his three groups of power elite as more or less co-equal. Certainly, he does not make clear, although at times he seems to imply it, that it is the economic structure of our society which determines its political and social institutions, that its economic rulers are decisive.

As Robert S. Lynd, Mills' distinguished fellow sociologist at Columbia, put it in a review for the Nation, there is an "in-and-out vagueness about class in the book." At times, Mills seems to face up to the realities of capitalism and the capitalist. At times, he seems to duck with technical and none-too-clear terminology about the "power elite."

Mills dislikes the term of a "ruling class." But one wonders whether he doesn't throw out more than a term. Lynd suggests that the power elite concept he substitutes "provides a glittering focus above common, troublesome things like capitalism and the class structure of a capitalist society.

But if Mills' effort to provide a substitute for the ruling class is unsuccessful, he does provide many important insights into the structure of our society. He is certainly far closer to the truth than most of our academic sociologists. He has provided a wealth of valuable facts and documents. And he has written an interesting, stimulating book.

The American Road to Socialism

Party Cannot Afford Another Blind Alley

By JOHN JERSEY

NEW JERSEY.

OUR PARTY is in crisis; and its outcome must lay the base for a growth in maturity and working class roots deeper than any we have known before in the United States.

We are not likely to solve all our problems all at once. But at any cost, we cannot afford another blind alley. In the opinion of many comrades, there are basic questions un-assessed by our national leadership, or assessed wrongly, that can set the course for a new brace of errors unless our party finds answers to them.

Chief among the untackled questions is the need to come to grips with the roots of our pendulum pattern of swinging from "left" to right opportunist errors and back again; and in relation to it, to trace the roots of our "left"-sectarian errors of the last 10 years.

It would be foolish to seek a single source for these errors. But there are two directions into which I believe we have to look very closely, and which are neglected or treated most superficially in comrade Dennis' report. One, completely ignored, is the element of capitulation in "left"-sectarianism, which is its bond to right opportunist errors. The other, handled most mechanically, is the question of party style of work, particularly in relation to the problems of bureaucracy.

★

IN MY opinion, the failure to tackle the roots of our "left"-sectarian errors is tied in with some wrong assessments of the errors themselves, notably that of "over-emphasis of the war danger."

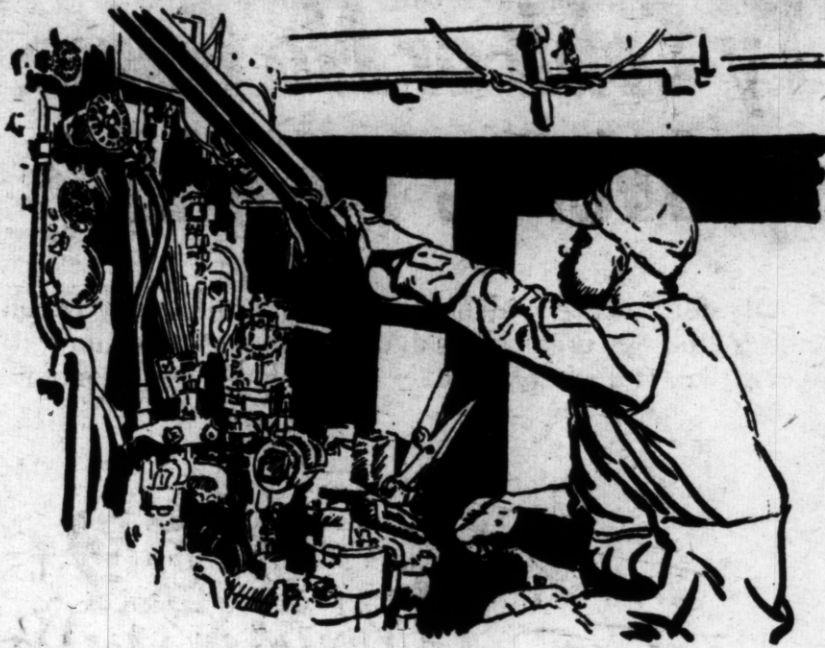
It is my opinion that Max Weiss' attempted "revision of fundamental tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory on the fatal inevitability of war" is actually a distortion of Leninist theory; and it represents a theoretical error which, if it is allowed to stand, can result in considerable harm to our party.

I would like to make it clear at the outset that the objection here is not to the attempt to revise basic theory as such. There can be no room for "sacred cow-ism" in our thinking; and if any portion of theory is actually untenable, we must of course revise or scrap it.

But, as we have reason to remember, basic theory can also be revised wrongly. One way is by distorting or mis-interpreting facts so that the theory appears no longer applicable. Browder's revisionism was of this type. Another form of wrong revision of theory is to distort the theory itself—that is, to mis-state it. That is the course taken by comrade Weiss in reference to the "fatal inevitability of the outbreak of wars."

Weiss says, in his report to the national committee, that: ". . . the 20th Congress of the CPSU boldly and creatively revised one of the most fundamental tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory by declaring that while imperialism continues, as in the past, to breed the danger of war, the actual outbreak of imperialist war can no longer be considered a fatal inevitability." (P. 10; bold face added).

WHAT IS this "fundamental tenet of Marxist-Leninist theory" that comrade Weiss says has been revised? Is it the idea that imperialism "breeds the danger of war"? Obviously not—for, as Weiss admits, this "continues as in the past." The "tenet" which comrade Weiss has "revised" is



that of the "fatal inevitability of the actual outbreak of imperialist war," which he says can "no longer" be accepted as valid.

"This helps eliminate much theoretical unclarity in the fight for peace," comrade Weiss continues. "From the beginning of our struggle against the danger of a new war, it was the position of our party that despite the war orientation of American imperialism, a third world war was not inevitable. But in actual fact, this position collided with the tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory on this question."

In actual fact, this is nonsense, and a gross distortion of Marxist-Leninist theory. There is no such "tenets," fundamental or otherwise, as the "fatal inevitability" of the "actual outbreak of imperialist war."

Leninism views war as "inevitable" to imperialism in that there are specific factors in the system itself which inherently make for war—or exactly as Weiss puts it, in that imperialism "breeds the danger of war." But it is alien to the whole spirit and course of Leninism to speak of the "fatal inevitability" of the "actual outbreak of war." Is it really necessary to document this? Forty-nine years ago, at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International, Lenin wrote the two closing paragraphs of the main resolution, calling on the working classes of all countries to "exert every effort to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the accentuation of the class struggle and of the general political situation."

★

THIS CALL served as the basis for the famous Basle Manifesto of the Second International in 1912. It was betrayed, of course, by the Social-Democrats. But certainly Communists worthy of the name have never relaxed the perspective of trying to lead workers in struggle against the outbreak of war. This perspective filled the view of the working class in the period of struggle for collective security, launched in 1935 by the 7th World Congress of the Communist International; and for the Soviet Union it has taken the form of struggle for peaceful co-existence in the period since World War II.

As such, the notion of "fatal inevitability" of the outbreak of war was rejected by the Soviet party leadership in a number of statements, ranging from Stalin's declaration with Roosevelt and Churchill at Teheran in 1943, estimating the possibility of peace "for several generations to come," on through several press interviews not long before Stalin's death; and it has been re-stated quite forcefully by Khrushchev in the wake of even more favorable objective condi-

tions that have been developing in the last few years.

The big difference between Basle (or even the 7th World Congress) and the situation today, provides the substance of Khrushchev's report: that there is a new relationship of forces in the world today which, for the first time, has put the "peace zone" in the ascendancy. This situation was achieved as the result of new objective developments in the world; and it was accelerated by the Soviet party tearing loose the blinkers it had developed toward making the most of these new possibilities for peace in the five or six years prior to Stalin's death. But the blinkers weren't put there by Leninist theory; nor was the situation changed in "collision" with any Leninist tenets.

Why, then, does comrade Weiss speak of our party's official position during the period now under review (that war was "not inevitable" that it could be prevented) as having "collided with the tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory on this question"—when in fact it didn't?

★

IF THIS WERE merely an academic error on Weiss' part, it would not be such a serious matter. But although his approach is most academic, its results are not. In this connection, there are two factors which I believe must be given careful examination.

The first is that comrade Weiss' error does not assist us in the self-critical analysis we so deeply need. Its objective effect, in fact, is to serve as a deflection of criticism—for if the fault lies with Marxist-Leninist theory, it is obviously the theory that must be blamed, and we need not look too searchingly at our own part in helping to create our problems.

The second factor is that comrade Weiss' incorrect analysis, based on a distortion of Marxist-Leninism, also provides a theoretical basis for comrade Dennis' proposition that the source of our error during the cold war years was "over-estimation of the war danger." If Leninist theory held that war was "fatally inevitable" at a time when it was "no longer" factually true due to changed objective circumstances; and if we followed "Leninist theory" on this question regardless of the changed circumstances—then it follows quite logically that we had to "over-estimate the danger of war."

The flaw in the structure of this thinking, of course, is that it is based on a false premise. Like the story of the Emperor's new clothes, there is no "Leninist tenet" of "fatal inevitability" of the outbreak of wars.

★

ACTUALLY, IF we examine comrade Weiss' and comrade Dennis' position, we will find that each, in a different way, is

CORRECTION

The article "We Must Blame Ourselves for Our Isolation," by George Samson in the July 15 issue of The Worker incorrectly described him as from New York. He is from New Jersey.

describing a contradiction in our party's stand on war during the cold war years; and I believe this contradiction was a real one, although the reasons to which comrades Dennis and Weiss ascribe it must be rejected.

According to comrade Weiss, our position was that war was not inevitable, but this "collided with Marxist-Leninist theory" with contradictory results. According to comrade Dennis, our position was that war was not inevitable, but we "over-emphasized the danger of war" with contradictory results. In effect, each is saying that our party's stated position was that war was not inevitable—but our leadership often acted as if it was.

I believe this is true; but I do not believe the reason for it can be found either in "Marxist-Leninist theory" or in a simplified "over-estimate of the war danger" during the cold war years. In my opinion, concrete examination of our errors during the period of the cold war and its "hot phases" will show their source to be not alone errors of "estimate," but far more deepgoing problems; and not "Leninist theory," but matters much closer to home plate. Among them, in my opinion, are:

1—An immature, academic approach to Marxist-Leninist theory.

2—Under-estimation of the people's will to peace in the people's own way, including peace expressions within the framework of anti-Soviet feeling.

3—Closely tied to the above factors, capitulation to the difficulties of a period in which the dangers of war were quite sharp—expressing itself both in "left"-sectarian actions as well as in acceptance (in fact, if not in statements) of a "fatal inevitability" of war. (It is in this sense, in my opinion, that mention of our leadership's "over-estimate of the war danger" has meaning—that is, in terms of the element of capitulation that is so often involved in "left"-sectarianism. But it is the capitulation factor that needs the attention of the party, and not merely its expression in "estimates.")

4—Straitjacketing our thinking into positions expressed by the Soviet party, regardless of whether they were right or wrong, and regardless of whether they fitted American problems even though they might have been right in reference to the Soviet situation.

5—Bureaucratic rejection of attempts at independent thinking on policy questions by comrades at lower levels of leadership, expressing positive possibilities more in line with the thinking of the people than that of our national leadership.

