

"The main thing..."

Molly Pitcher

[Theodore W. Allen]

March 1, 1957

Every Communist's heart beats for Socialism, the sure and certain eventual outcome of the class struggle. We often say, "Socialism is not on the order of the day in our country, today." That is true, of course. But that is only half the story: The people may not be ready for Socialism, but neither are we Communists! I am not speaking of the size of our membership, now. If, today, Socialism were on the order of the day, and we were elected by the workers to lead in the task — we would not know how to proceed! Why not? Because we lack clarity on fundamental theoretical questions!

Today, it is nothing less than the most fundamental questions upon which there is the deepest divergence of views within our Party — the nature of imperialism, capitalist economic cycle, the nature of the state and democracy, the status of the Negro question, proletarian internationalism, socialist democracy, the danger of war.

It is sheer pragmatism to speak of "getting on with the practical work" in the absence of clarity on the fundamental theoretical questions. Such a philosophy is all right for the bourgeoisie, which isn't going anywhere historically, anyway. But for a workers' party it is absolutely ruinous, if not soon corrected.

For this urgent correction of the intolerable situation in our Party, deep probing thought is required, but, above all, correction must start with

an absolutely uncompromising defense of the science of Marxism-Leninism.

This article is dedicated to that proposition, and deals with the question of the state and democracy.

II. GATES FORGETS "THE MAIN THING"

Marxism-Leninism, like any other science, must remain open to correction and development. However, scientific theories develop around certain major central facts and premises, without which they lose their vitality as guiding principles. For Marxism-Leninism, that living heart is its theory of the class struggle: 1) the class struggle as the driving force of history since primitive communism; and, 2) the inevitable historic outcome of that struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism and communism. "The main thing in the teaching of Marx is the elucidation of the worldwide historical role of the proletariat as the builder of a socialist society." (Lenin, "Marx-Engels, Marxism," p.56.)

Comrade John Gates, *Daily Worker* editor, tells us that the Marxist-Leninist "theory of the state, etc." "needs to be modified." Gates limits himself in the cited article, "Time for a Change" in the November, 1956 *Political Affairs*, to two paragraphs on "Socialism and Democracy." One is led, therefore, to conclude that there is something in the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state which "needs to be modified" before, as Gates says, "we Americans (can) guarantee that American Socialism will be a fully democratic Socialism."

Gates says that ". . .the expansion of democracy is not automatic under Socialism..." Marxism-Leninism says: Socialism is democracy at the

latter's highest historic development — because it is the rule of the working class and its class allies! (" . . . the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to establish democracy. " *Communist Manifesto*, p. 30) If one fights for the working class state and its program, he fights for democracy; if he fights against it, he fights democracy; but, then, Comrade Gates is not thinking-ill terms of the class struggle. Yet, this is "the main thing in Marxism."

Gates says, "the expansion of democracy under Socialism . . . must be fought

for. "But who is to fight, and who is to be fought against — this is the question! Gates' answer: "Better controls by the people over their-leaders and institutions must be de-vised . . ." There we have it — who fights? — "the people"! And against whom do they fight? — "their leaders" and "their institutions"! Marxism-Leninism advocates only one fight — the class struggle of the working class against class exploitation and all its works. All else flows from that or is left aside. That is "the main thing in Marxism" and only in these terms does Marxism-Leninism ever speak of workers controlling their leaders and their institutions.

Gates says: "Better controls . . . must be devised than up until now to make impossible any future violations of democracy (under socialism)," etc. One is thus led to believe that Marxism-Leninism completely failed to anticipate this question and also that the positive accomplishments of socialist countries along this line are hardly worth mentioning. We are led to think that "we Americans" will have to start from scratch to save democracy from "perils" it will encounter under socialism. We shall see later on that the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state is a long way ahead of

Comrade Gates on this matter of "better controls." But, leaving that aside for the moment, we had a right to expect Gates to say something to confirm our faith in the potential ability of the working class to solve this question. Again, this is "the main thing in Marxism . . ."

Gates says: "We Americans must guarantee that American Socialism will be a fully democratic Socialism." But what class of Americans — that is the first question. Shall not "we Americans" (workers and farmers) find — even as the Russians, Chinese, etc., found — that other Americans (capitalists) are interested in "guaranteeing" that there will not be any Socialism, American, democratic or any other kind. Is not that "the main thing in Marxism. . . ?"

Gates says: "We Americans must guarantee..." (It is assumed that by "Americans" he means United States people.) But what about the role of the Puerto Ricans, the Hawaiians, the Phillipine people, the Mexicans, the Haitians, the Cubans — will they have no roles in guaranteeing "democratic Socialism"? What about the Russians, Chinese, the English, French, Germans and Italians? Is not the "building of socialist society" a "world-wide role of the working class"? Indeed, that is "the main thing in Marxism . . ."

Gates says: ". . . the issue is not the abandonment of Marxism-Leninism," but merely how "we interpret" it. Marxism-Leninism says that the relationship of socialism to democracy can be made meaningful only in terms of the class struggle. That is "the main thing" — and this "main thing" is what Gates' article tends to "interpret" out! These ideas of Comrade Gates are not an interpretation of Marxism- Leninism — they are a rejection of it.

III. MARXISM LENINISM: THE STATE

It is one thing, however, to show that Comrade Gates departs from Marxism - Leninism. It is yet another to show that he is wrong in doing so, and that the theory of Marxism-Leninism is a sound basis for correcting mistakes which have been made in regard to democracy under socialism.

The question is: Does the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state remain valid in the light of:

- 1) the revelation of violations of socialist legality committed within and by the Soviet state in Stalin's later years; and,
- 2) the enhanced possibilities for lasting peaceful coexistence of socialist and imperialist states?

It cannot be denied that the world situation today contains many relevant factors which Marxist-Leninist classic writings could not have anticipated. But, as I shall try to show, basic Marxist-Leninist theory, far from being obsolete, provides the only sure guide for not only 1) the rejection of false counsel; but, also 2) new, creative development of working class theory and practice "as the builder of socialist society."

More specifically, the questions raised by the documents of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, and by the developments since then in Poland and Hungary, do demand attention in the light of basic Marxist-Leninist theory. To fail in this would make it impossible to restore our Party to a correct path.

Perhaps we should begin by sketching in outline the essentials of the Marxist- Leninist theory of the state and of democracy.

Marxism-Leninism deals extensively with the theory of the state. Its founders, Marx and Engels, concluded that social production, upon which

life depends, could not long be carried on where one group did the work while another took the fruits, unless the latter group, the exploiting class, had some forceful means of keeping themselves on top.

Marxism-Leninism holds that the bourgeois-democratic state is such a class dictatorship, even though this fact is hidden behind the show of "rights", just as capitalism is a class-exploitation economic system, even though this exploitation is concealed in the wages-form of payment of labor.

Furthermore, Marxism-Leninism holds that no slave-owner, feudal, nor capitalist ruling class ever abdicates its state power; that every ounce of this repressive power is used to maintain that class dominance — and, if overthrown, to resort, still, to forceful means to restore that power by counter-revolution.

Marxism-Leninism always taught the workers to be front-line partisans of the bourgeois-democratic republic as against the feudalistic autocracies, even though the bourgeois-democratic republic is a class dictatorship of the capitalist class. In brief, the reasons for this support were as follows: 1) It promoted the development of capitalism and thereby the growth of the working class — the grave-digger of class society; 2) It affords some forms of struggle to the workers which develop the political and organizational understanding of their class; 3) Its typical democratic rights enable the oppressed masses to some degree, however slight, by dint of hard struggling, to wring from the ruling class certain reforms and concessions — concessions whose economic essence is, however, merely the reduction — not the abolition — of the intensity of the exploitation of the toiling masses by the bourgeoisie.

(Of course, a fourth reason, replacing the first one listed above, arose with the need to resist the fascist threat in the period of imperialist, dying capitalism.)

Basing itself on these scientific historical conclusions, Marxism-Leninism declared its conviction that the working class would have to establish and maintain— for a limited time — its rule by force — not as a means of maintaining class exploitation, but as a means of abolishing it forever. This force, then, is required merely to protect the development of socialist relations of production and their superstructure against bourgeois counter-revolution. Once this counter-revolutionary threat passes, this last in the long line of state types, is to pass out of the superstructure of society and, with it, all state power from the stage of history.

IV. MARXISM-LENINISM: DEMOCRACY

Marxist theory regards democracy as a general form of expression of the class struggle. Its central principle is the right of the majority to rule. When, as it usually is, it is used in connection with political life, it means the right of the majority to control the government.

At a certain stage of history, democracy implied — had as its logical outcome — governmental rule by the capitalist class. In our present day, democracy implies — has as its logical outcome — rule by the working class and its allies, the toiling masses of town and country generally.

Abstracted from the class struggle frame of reference, the term, democracy, is misused in varying degrees, even turned into its opposite. A majority in a locality where the working class is ideologically weak and where the bourgeoisie is relatively strong, may temporarily favor a reactionary, chauvinistic, racist, policy. But, if one is not to abandon

Marxism-Leninism, he will grasp the class essence of the struggle, and will see clearly that chauvinism, racism, jingoism, etc. , are incapable of expressing democracy. He will — if he does not propose to abandon Marxism-Leninism — penetrate from the appearance of social developments to their class essence. Such a comrade will know that no appeal to nationalism can express democracy if it is posed against proletarian and socialist internationalism. A Marxist-Leninist will know how to give the sharpest rebuff to the imperialist hypocrites, while at the same time he helps the whole international to change from errors it may have made. This he will be able to do because he thinks of democracy in class terms.

v. MARXISM-LENINISM: DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Flowing from this concept of democracy, is the Marxist-Leninist concept of democratic rights. In their chief, i.e., political, sense, democratic rights are the legal and formal means devised to promote the class struggle by and in the interests of the majority.

When the bourgeoisie was organizing the nations of peoples, it developed certain forms whereby the will of their nations could be brought to bear against their feudal anti-national and reactionary class enemies. When these forms have served their function for the bourgeois class as an Instrument of revolution, they continue to serve to a certain extent (if not overdone!) and for a more or less lengthy historic period as a means of maintaining "domestic tranquillity", that is, unchallenged bourgeois class rule! This is bourgeois class democracy.

Finding these forms at hand, the working class enters the political arena as an independent force, garbed in the skimpy and ill-fitting hand-

me-downs of bourgeois democracy. They serve, however poorly, the class struggle of the workers — and in direct proportion to the decline of their usefulness to the monopoly-dominated bourgeois class. (How can the appearance of the fascist threat be explained consistently without the Marxist-Leninist class concept of democracy?)

Now, the class content of the democratic struggle becomes anti-bourgeois, even though its forms remain bourgeois — restricted by all sorts of property, residence, literacy, "grandfather-clause", etc., qualifications. Above all, it is fatally limited by its economic base, by the fact that ownership of, not only the means of production, but of the material facilities for the exercise of democratic rights, are monopolized by the anti-democratic minority class.

Eventually, the working class and its allies are forced by the development of the class struggle to resort to that ultimate of democratic rights — the right of revolution. They establish a new state power — that of the democratic masses, led by the working class.

VI. MARXISM-LENINISM: SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

But, then what happens? This is the big question brought into focus for Marxist-Leninists by the revelations about certain departures from democratic forms and practices in countries where the bourgeoisie has been ousted from power, in the USSR, Poland and Hungary, for example.

The establishment of the socialist state, the rule of the working class and its allies, is the greatest possible historic democratic victory, because it places in the hands of the masses of people the means of ending all human exploitation. But Marxism teaches and life proves that it is absolutely vital that this new state give great attention to the development of democratic

rights. Since the means of production and the facilities for the exercise of democratic rights are now the property of the working class and its allies, the expansion of democratic action is so great that it becomes a higher type than could ever be possible under capitalism. Partial failure to realize in life this necessary development of democratic forms, led to serious consequences in the Soviet Union, Hungary and elsewhere in the socialist world. More on that later on in this article. First, why does Marxism-Leninism stress the importance of this question of the development of the forms of socialist democracy?

For the three following general reasons:

First: The class struggle does not come to an immediate end with the revolution. The former exploiters continue by all possible means to get back into power. Democracy, as a general form of the class struggle for majority rule, must be developed in all sorts of political forms in order that the class struggle will succeed in wiping out all remnants of the counter-revolution.

Second: The ideological influence of the old exploiting classes remains as the force of a million bad habits of social life among the workers and farmers — narrow individualism, bureaucratic attitudes toward labor, anti-scientific attitudes, racism, chauvinism, etc., and including the much-mentioned "cult of the individual." The people must be mobilized in democratic forms to struggle against these ideas and practices which obstruct the revolutionary advance of the majority. This is a struggle which starts before the revolution and lasts even after there are no remnants of any class whom these backward ideas might serve.

Third: The last stages of the class struggle are the furnaces at which the steel is tempered and drawn for the rational moral code of conduct of

human relations which will not know the need for the forcible subjection of any part of society by any other part. Democracy under socialism, then, is necessary to train society for the rule of reason instead of the rule of mere interest.

In keeping with their class struggle theory, Marx, Engels and Lenin laid considerable stress on the elementary guarantees for democratic rights under socialism. The main guiding ideas as to the forms of these rights were as follows: (See Lenin's "State and Revolution".)

1) All administrative, judicial and educational posts would be filled by elections and subject to recall by the same means at any time, on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned.

2) Officials should be paid salaries no greater than the wages received by the workers in the shops and fields, ships and mines.

3) The functions of government must be made ever simpler — not more complex — every last one of us should be involved in the administration of political, economic and cultural affairs. Take the mystery out of government. "Every cook must be taught how to run the state." (Lenin) "Educate and inform the whole mass of the people. They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty." (Jefferson) Where every one is a "bureaucrat" no one can be a bureaucrat.

I cite these, not as the "last word," but to show that the science of Marxism - Leninism does not neglect the question of post-revolutionary democratic rights.

In their view, however, these rights are not the mere working out of abstract justice and fair play, not humanitarian concessions, but necessities. They are forms which serve the working class in bringing to bear the maximum pressure for the complete annihilation of the bourgeoisie and its

influence. Democratic political rights under socialism, again, are forms of the class struggle of the majority against the anti-socialist, anti-working class minority.

To speak of democratization, then, in a socialist country, does not mean kidding the bourgeoisie into believing that the workers will consider bearing the yoke again. Exactly the opposite: it means the development of the means whereby practically every last one of the masses can be enlisted in the class struggle against the old ruling class -- and, against all the bureaucratic, exploitative attitudes with which the people to some inevitable extent have been infected by class society.

Does this not show that Marxist-Leninist science — far from being obsolete — provides a piercing light for correction of errors that have been made? Is it not more substantial than vague talk about "civil liberties under Socialism," as is seen in the Resolution of the 16th National Convention of our Party?

VII. NEW PROBLEMS

However, as we all know, Marxist-Leninist theoretical writings on this question did not anticipate the following two circumstances:

- 1) The development of a society in which there would no longer be any antagonistic classes, but which would exist for a long period within the encirclement of ravening imperialist states.

- 2) The Establishment of the rule of the working class (the dictatorship of the proletariat) in countries at the time under occupation of friendly, but foreign, armies.

Reports from the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary indicate that in various ways and degrees the working class governments departed from

and distorted Marxist-Leninist class struggle policies in such a way as to inhibit the development of democratic rights. To a certain extent, a policy of substituting the Party for the class led towards substituting the bureaucratic privilege for the democratic right; towards substituting the surveillance by police for Lenin's well-known "workers and peasants inspection."

How did these departures from a Marxist-Leninist class struggle policy in regard to democratic rights and forms come about? And what is the general line of theoretical conclusions indicated for eliminating these errors? (It goes without saying that a scientific outlook cannot consider such far-reaching developments as a mere question of the faults of individual leaders — although such personal factors have some shaping effect on events.)

VIII. NEW PROBLEMS - USSR

First, let us take the case of the departures from Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union. There developed a unique and unanticipated conjunction of the following facts:

1) A society without antagonistic classes (after 1935), but surrounded by aggressive imperialist states.

2) A society without antagonistic classes, but with a state power which — far from "withering away" — became increasingly strong.

3) A society without antagonistic classes, but still retaining to an important degree within its cultural and political life certain superstructural elements left over as a heritage from class society, particular significance for the present question being these two:

- a) the attitude taught by history of regarding opposition to authority as always being rooted in class opposition to the state.
- b) the attitude of worship of authority.

There we see the basic elements upon which developed the distortions of socialist: legality exposed by the 20th Congress. Where a misconceived class struggle policy is imposed against a portion of a classless society "then there" develops the "necessity" for proceeding "without being afraid," as Andrei Vishinsky wrote, "to depart from Socialist principles." ("J.V. Stalin's Doctrine of the Socialist State," p.29.)

However, instead of lamenting so demonstratively over our so-called past "uncritical attitude toward the USSR," we would do the part of proletarian fraternity if we were to try to suggest some answers on the basis of the common theory of Marxism - Leninism.

How, for instance, should a socialist state without classes to rule, but surrounded by class states behave in relation to its own society? When there is nobody left to "dictate to" (i.e., no remaining counter-revolutionary class within the country), what does the "dictatorship" do, in relation to the people in its own country? Since it cannot "wither away" while imperialist aggression is a threat, what happens with this force, as far as the conduct of affairs at home is concerned? In such a classless society, what is the function of the "internal security forces" — the police, the prisons and the jails?

The problem is not simply "devising better controls by the people over their leaders and institutions" as Comrade Gates would have us think. After all, there is no class antagonism between the leaders and the institutions, on the one hand, and the people, on the other. There are better or worse leaders and institutions. If one of these fails to do his or its job,

get another one which "shall seem most likely to effect their (the people's) safety and happiness," as Jefferson said in the Declaration. That is the revolutionary way. Or, if one of these does a good job — throw all devoted support to that one and make that one a pattern for passionate emulation.

A revolution is not a reform. A working class revolution "controls" only those evils it hasn't the strength immediately to extirpate altogether. "Controls" are a compromise with evil, expedients, and not of the order of first principles to which Comrade Gates would elevate them in order to "modify" the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state.

Or, looking at it from another angle, might not one also say that in a certain sense, the leaders should "control" the people — in the same sense that a teacher controls a learner? Leaders are not leaders, who do not control in this sense of the correction of tendencies to error and weakness among the people. Without such "controls" by leaders (who are in turn "controlled," i.e., chosen and rejected, by the people) progress would be inconceivable. These controls, too, must be "better devised." But, again, at bottom, it is not really a matter of "controlling" backward attitudes and practices, but of eradicating them and replacing them with better ones. That is the revolutionary way.

It is not a game of "controls"; communism is not posturing anarchism.

The problem which existed in the case of the Soviet Union was not "leaders and institutions" in general, but that certain specific leaders and institutions retained, and even increased, their ability to control by the forceful means — police, jails, etc. — of the state power.

The Marxist-Leninist theory of the state has always put central emphasis on the theme of "the withering away" of state power as class antagonisms disappear. But where the state power cannot wither away

(because of the foreign threat), then, short of force, there is no way of replacing or changing these military and police leaders and institutions, except by their own agreement.

This is not so of other institutions, the Party, the trade unions, the press, schools, for example, and their leaders who can be changed and replaced merely by (if necessary) withholding cooperation (finances, service, etc.) from any who may refuse to submit to the interests of the collective, the people.

Therefore, we can see that the problem is not "better controls" in general "over leaders and institutions" in general. It is how to control these — military and police — institutions and these — military and police — leaders for the limited time during which they must necessarily be vested with the means of superior force — armed bodies of men, prisons, etc. The problem is how to control these instrumentalities of force in order that, insofar as the development of purely domestic affairs is concerned — it and their special status may, in effect, begin and continue to "wither away

But in the Soviet Union, the knottiest difficulty in this question came in connection with the inevitable problem of the infiltration of imperialist agents, spies and wreckers. That problem: How can the state power be brought to bear to counter, to ferret out and dispose safely of secret imperialist agents, while that state power, at the same time, "withers away" from intervention in the domestic affairs of the people? The 20th Congress revealed that the Soviet Union up until recent years, at least, had not succeeded in solving this complex problem.

If, in dealing with such secret enemies, secret police activities are necessary, a potential peril is thereby created for socialist democracy.

Why? For the reason that secrecy, in connection with public interest, is the very opposite to the spirit and morality of democracy. Therefore, in a society in which there are no longer any antagonistic classes, such necessary secret police must not be allowed to function in the slightest degree as a political police. There, politics is the business of the whole people, not of a special repressive agency.

But how is this control to be made enforceable without necessary prior agreement by the state, itself. What other force or forces can be strong enough to make the state "mind its own business" — foreign enemies? I would suggest a combination of preventive and curative policies in line with what we have already seen of Marxist-Leninist theory:

First: To the maximum practicable extent, police officials (as distinct from agents under them) — starting from the top down — should be elected by direct, universal, secret elections and subject to recall in the same manner at any time.

Second: Police and military salaries, especially at the higher levels, should not be attractive in relation to other jobs requiring comparable levels of education. Only the most devoted and selfless persons should be willing to serve in these functions.

Third: The authority of these instruments of force should be specific and limited. They should be forbidden to make political discrimination in the exercise of their power.

Fourth: Not the police, but the people and their organizations must be the arbiters

— and not only the final ones — but the day-to-day arbiters of political questions. The working class nation (working class which is in the process of "constituting itself the nation") must remain as a normal thing, in a

ferment of political activity in all forms, involving practically every last one in some creative contribution to the shaping of the common life.

Fifth: The right to strike should be real. Like separatist use of the right of self-determination of nations, its use under socialism would generally reflect a limited understanding by those using it. But, to use physical force to repress such an action, would reflect an even greater backwardness on the part of those using that force.

Sixth: Military service should be universal and "the right to possess and bear arms in time of peace" should not be "abridged."

Seventh: Persons charged with spying and wrecking should be given prompt and public trials.

Eighth: Any form of physical pressure for extorting confessions must itself be regarded as the most dangerous of crimes.

Would such rules entail risks — provocations, some unpunished crimes? Undoubtedly so! But at least these would be out in the open, subject to public study and action. On the other hand, what possible risk could be greater than an alternative which can permit an imperialist agent to become, as Beria did, head of a political police, beyond public scrutiny and check?

Would such rules entail the development of anti-socialist political movements? Undoubtedly, no! For, there would be no possible class base for such a movement in a country in which not only private property in the means of production, but also the classes that owned it, have disappeared.

IX. NEW PROBLEMS - "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES"

Then what about countries in another category: Those which have taken the road to communism, but have not yet gotten out of the post-revolutionary period.

There, in many instances, in town, as well as in the country, private property in the means of production will continue to exist to some extent for a time as a political and economic necessity^ Furthermore, there still exist the expropriated former capitalists. Property can be expropriated, but souls cannot. The soul of an expropriated capitalist is an aching void which he disconsolately contemplates. In time, the pain may subside and a new soul grow there, but in the meantime he is consumed with one passion, restoration of his property and the social eminence that went with it.

Political programs and activities emanating from such property and profit interests must be checked and eliminated. This is the situation, generally speaking, today in China and the Eastern European People's Democracies. What of the internal repressive forces in such instances? What of the use of the police, the prisons, etc. , the means of forcing acceptance on others? In the face of this situation, should the police have political functions to any extent?

Under such post-revolutionary conditions, revolutionary political police functions of a democratic proletarian dictatorship are an inescapable necessity. Counter-revolutionary activities must be opposed with all means, including forcible repressions, to whatever extent necessary, to protect the complete development of the revolution. The socialist law says so in black and white; and police and prisons are instruments of the law.

But, when such police, in the performance of political police work, themselves violate the revolutionary law, then they, to that degree, become transformed into their opposite, i.e., servers of counter-revolution. Is that

not part of the lesson of the Poznan trials, on the one hand, and of the counter-revolutionary rising in Budapest, on the other?

Can such dangers of violations of revolutionary socialist legality by political police be avoided? Not entirely. For, aside from cruel and stupid "excesses of zeal" in investigations, etc. , the still strong class enemy will to some degree succeed in infiltrating the police for provocative purposes.

Except for their necessary political functions, these police should function under the same limitations of law and circumstance as in the case of the police force in countries where there are no longer any antagonistic classes.

But how are these political functions to be kept free of corruption and abuse of power? To speak of a political struggle, means a class struggle. This post-revolutionary struggle of the workers for the consolidation of their class power is the sharpest and widest and deepest in all history. The entire class, history shows, must be engaged in this struggle to assure final victory. The special political police cannot substitute for the class. It is the class which overthrows the bourgeoisie and their political police. And, if the workers remain in the state of militant mobilization necessary to consolidate the revolution, they will thereby guarantee against excesses and violations by the political police. The reasons for this will be as follows:

First: Such police violations of revolutionary discipline are a luxury which the intense struggle in such a period will not afford. The extirpation of such undemocratic practices becomes very quickly a life-or-death matter for the revolution — which must prove its moral qualities from day to day.

Second: The forcible means of power in such a situation, of necessity is not concentrated in the hands of special groups of armed men. The

whole people is up in arms, literally, so that the relative force advantage of the political police is negligible. Their successes depend upon the revolutionary understanding and stamina, just like those of anybody else.

But perhaps Hungarian events have shown that where the mobilization of the masses behind a militant and fighting working class movement is neglected; where the Party fails to follow consistently a true Marxist-Leninist class struggle policy, there, violations of democratic rights by the political police can serve to endanger the very existence of the revolution (and, in the Hungarian case, of world peace).

Marx, Engels and Lenin did not treat with the question of the possible establishment of working class rule in countries at the time under the total or partial occupation of friendly, but foreign armies as has happened following World War II in some Eastern European countries.

Events have shown that this manner of revolution has its special problems. Whatever military campaigns may have marched and counter-marched over them, not all of them had been prepared by the development of their internal class relations, for working class rule. That is to say: If, after the defeat of the Nazi army, the Red Army had been immediately withdrawn to the Soviet borders (which fortunately for the world it was not!), then it is not at all certain that all of the areas now under working class rule would have become so.

The friendly foreign socialist army can protect democracy from a fascist counter-revolutionary resurgence, but the success of the revolutionary transformation of the nation is beyond its powers. As Lenin said, the main thing in Marxism is that this is the role of the working class in every country. To win the necessary revolutionary support of almost all of the toiling people for a socialist transformation, whose timing has been

determined more by foreign than by domestic affairs, is, as we have seen, not so simple as issuing a bulletin from a government building.

Marxism-Leninism teaches that the Communists have no interests separate and apart from the working class. The interests of the workers are linked with those of the working farmers, who must be convinced to follow the workers' leadership. Therefore, the rate of development of the socialization of agriculture may have to be much slower than material conditions might otherwise indicate — in order that this working class leadership may be maintained.

Marxism-Leninism teaches that Communists do not let dogmatic schemes serve in place of hard-headed proletarian realism. Therefore, the rate of basic industry construction may have to be slower than objective conditions might indicate, if the workers do not as yet have the revolutionary conviction required for the temporary sacrifices entailed in such a program.

The rude shocks of recent experiences in the People's Democracies in building a socialist order, have given rise to much talk about "different national roads to socialism."

However, it is my opinion that the main problem is not what road to take to socialism. How can that road be any other than the maintenance of the workers' power as the ruling class? How else can they fulfill their "historic role as the builders of socialist society"? As I see it, the problem for these East European governments is not what road to take, but how fast to attempt to travel this road to full socialist transformation. These governments are not products of strictly their own internal national development, as contrasted with the Soviet and the Chinese governments. Therefore, they did not come to power with the great degree of popular

support and moral authority that the latter enjoyed, and for that reason, while the road lies smoother ahead, they must, paradoxically, move the slower.

X. OLD PROBLEMS - NEW FORM - THE "HERO" CULT

How has the so-called "cult of the individual" contributed to violations of socialist democracy and revolutionary discipline and made correction more difficult? This is an interesting subject upon which theoretical study has hardly more than begun.

However, it is immediately clear that the "cult of the individual" did not originate in socialist society. (That is one reason that this term should not be turned into "the Stalin cult", as some comrades have done after the manner of the bourgeois press. Such a short-cut in terminology bypasses the necessary field of historical and psychological study that must be explored for scientific conclusions to be drawn on this subject.)

This "cult of the individual" has a lineage as an idea running back through centuries of the epic hero tradition, the Messiah hope, the "divine right of kings", characteristic in various forms in all known cultures.

Furthermore, we can see that, although democracy has its own great heroes, the "hero cult" is anti-democratic intrinsically. For, one speaks for rule by the "hero" minority, the other, for rule by the non-heroic, run-of-the-mill majority of ordinary human beings.

Thirdly, from the advanced stand of the proletariat, "the builder of socialist society", the hero cult is corrupting, because it inevitably engenders and encourages individualistic, selfish attitudes.

An attribute of the "hero" has invariably been his ability to dominate. This sort of idea reflected and served the dominant class against the masses, because the underside of this idea is that "might is right. "We might well note that in the same letter by Marx from which the Soviet Party cited the phrase "cult of the individual", Marx links it with "the superstitious worship of authority." In my opinion, the "worship of authority" is the term through which the present main problems arising from the "cult of the individual" can most directly and effectively be analyzed.

When class antagonisms shall have disappeared from the world, then the power of one group or person over others — the armies, the prisons, all the instruments of repression will also disappear from practical use. Under such conditions, perhaps the "hero cult" will for a time still exist in some degree, for such extremely old ideas have shown an amazing adaptability down the centuries of societies.

But of two things we could be sure:

First: The hero cult's main critical danger to society would have by that time passed, because the hand of history would have robbed the "heroes" of what has been their most essential attribute — the ability of their cause to dominate by force.

Secondly: The "hero" concept, thus knocked from his high horse and disarmed, would find himself at a dire disadvantage where the weapons are only two, which are equally available to all, i.e. , reason and the collective interest.

However, again, in the Soviet Union, we have the case of a society without class antagonisms within it but surrounded by imperialist states. Necessarily, the power to dominate, armed bodies of men, etc. , remains. It

has now been revealed by the CPSU that there the "hero tradition" was exploited to reinforce this power of the state and that thereby the state was seriously corrupted. In instances, heart-rending to think on, the prison, physical pressure, and the firing squad became the "winning arguments. " The "hero cult," again, taught, as of old, that "might makes right. "

But the working class, according to Marxism-Leninism is — when armed with a scientific theory — the first and only fully self-conscious class. It is capable of reshaping the world and its ideas because it has the key to their "secret" laws of development. Why, then, did it not in the Soviet Union head off this most harmful manifestation of a bourgeois habit at the very beginning?

Generally, the explanation is along the following line: At first the Central Committee thoroughly agreed with Stalin and saw nothing to challenge. Later, frightful abuses of authority were seen but the main job of building socialism was being accomplished under Stalin's leadership. Next, the war of survival against the Nazis made it impossible to inaugurate a fight against the corruption of power by the "hero cult." And, finally, after the war, Stalin enjoyed as the "conquering hero" a practically unchallengeable position of popular authority.

There is a great deal of obvious logic in this reasoning, although there are many exceptions which might be taken to it. But, leaving that aside, one must inquire: Since this "hero cult" corruption did not exist in the Party and the state in Lenin's time, how did it later infiltrate the state and Party with such devastating effect? After all, it could not have sprung into being, full-blown, in a day. Why wasn't this budding "hero cult," in the

Party and the state, cut down? Why were Lenin's warnings on this matter disregarded?

I, myself, can think of only three possible answers: 1) The Party leaders were themselves saturated with the backward idea of "worship of authority"; or, 2) They deliberately calculated to use the "hero cult" for the purposes of the fight against the bourgeoisie; or, 3) A combination of the first two reasons.

Some may say that "Of course, hindsight is wonderful, but in reality was it actually possible to challenge this hero cult in those stern days without jeopardizing the workers' state, itself?"

Unless one can answer that question in a strong affirmative — Yes, it was possible, and more, it was necessary, the sterner the days, the more necessary the "challenge — unless one can answer thus, he still has not grasped the essential significance of the "cult of the individual." For, Stalin could have accomplished nothing except through and by the revolutionary fighting spirit of the millions. On the other hand, given that fiery, irresistible determination of the toiling people to change from the old life altogether come what sufferings may, and given the Marxist Party and its Marxist- Leninist science — then no force on earth can stop the people from building socialism.

It is sufficient to remember that the days through which Lenin led the Party were at least as critical as the ten-year period after his death. Yet, Lenin in his time never acted in any other manner than as a good "collectivist" in the Party and the state. Lenin never imposed by force, his views upon his co-workers.

The "hero" and the collective are opposing concepts. That Stalin made historic contributions to the development of Marxist-Leninist science is indisputable. That he was the main leader in the building of socialist society over many years has earned him an everlasting place of credit in the history of society. But, to the increasing extent that he allowed himself the "hero" pose, he blighted the very factor which in the last analysis made it possible for him to play a great man's role in history. The "hero cult" is a cancellation of the revolutionary spirit.

In the limited context of the aim of this article, I shall confine myself to the following conclusions on this matter:

First: The harmful development of the "hero cult" in the Soviet state and Party cannot be regarded as having been inevitable. It was the result of a departure from Marxist-Leninist political and party principles which had long been established.

Second: The state power under socialist society — the police, prisons, etc. — where they are still needed for national defense, must be in effect, made to "wither away" in relation to the internal development of society's affairs. Thereby, the mortal blow will be struck at the "hero cult," because the "hero" will thus be deprived of any means of imposing his will on his co-workers by force.

Third: The long-standing error of the CPSU in this matter lent strong reinforcement to the ever-present "hero cult" influence stemming directly from the bourgeois class upon the Communist movement in every country. This, in my opinion, goes to the heart of the all-too-long and dreary history of bureaucratic abuses of comrades in the movement. One might correctly say: "scratch a 'hero' and find a bureaucrat", or, "read the heart of a bureaucrat and find an 'authority worshipper'."

Fourth: Marxism-Leninism preaches the "cult" of only two "heroes" — the common man and woman. And when every one is a hero, no one can be a hero.

XI. "PEACEFUL TRANSITION" - SOME QUESTIONS

I shall conclude with a brief discussion on the question of the theory of the state as related to the "advocacy of the peaceful transition to socialism" as presented in the Resolution adopted at the recent 16th National Convention. This is not an attempt to give any complete treatment of the question, but rather simply to indicate what I consider some of the elementary weaknesses and fallacies of the Resolution and that these result from a departure from basic Marxist-Leninist theory.

"The basic question in any revolution," said Lenin who led the Party which led one, "is that of state power. Unless this is understood, there can be no intelligent participation in the revolution, let alone direction of it." (Collected Works, Vol. XX, p. 115) Why is this true? For the simple reasons that:

1) As long as a class holds state power — the means of forceful repression — it is going to use all such means necessary to maintain its rule. (If one does not believe this, let him become a reform missionary among the ruling class.)

2) Without state power — the means of forceful repression — in its hands, the revolutionary class cannot stabilize its authority. (If one does not believe this, then let him become a missionary among counter-revolutionists.)

The validity of this Marxist-Leninist statement, in fact, is so obvious that so far nobody has suggested that it is a "dogma", "Holy Writ", etc.

Perhaps, then, it may serve as a starting point in evaluating the slogan of the "advocacy of peaceful transition."

What is the substance of "advocacy" of "peaceful transition"? Is it that the workers "advocate" that the capitalists refrain from using force to prevent the solution of the people's pressing problems? This would be too much like the well-known fable of the mice deciding to bell the cat: Without the cooperation of the cat it couldn't come to much success, and with the cooperation of the cat, well, in that case there wouldn't be any need for the warning bell in the first place!

What are the monopolists supposed to get in return for their cooperation? Is it that they are to be spared the terrifying sound of the word "revolution" — "transition's" the thing! — and be allowed a sense of pride in not having obstructed the march of progress? Deponent sayeth not.

What else of the substance of this "advocacy of peaceful transition?" Revolution, or as the saying is, "transition", consists not only in achieving state power, but equally as much in maintaining it once it has been achieved! Does the "advocacy of peaceful transition" mean that the workers-and-farmers government in the United States is to be "advocated to" by Communists NOT to resort to force where necessary to stamp out counter-revolutionary provocations, etc.? If this is what is meant the argument is in trouble., For, on the one hand, if we "advocate" peaceful transition in relation to this second phase — the consolidation of the revolution — then we become like anarchists, rather than continuers, as we claim, of the tradition of Lincoln and Douglass. On the other hand, if we tell the people that we have a "new" policy of "advocating" that the enemies of the workers shall be "peaceful" while they are overthrown by the workers, but that then we shall advocate the use of force to repress the

inevitable ensuing counter-revolutionary attempts, then we would be marked fools, first, and hypocrites, second, poor candidates for leadership of the workers' struggle.

What further, is there to this "advocacy of peaceful transition"? Does it mean that today, when "transition" is not on the agenda, we are "advocating" against any "non-peaceful" transition to socialism in any such future circumstances as may put the transition to socialism as a life-and-death matter before the nation? If the answer is "Yes," let us henceforth hear no more talk about getting rid of old dogmas — this new one is much worse! If the answer be "No," then what is the value of "advocating" a policy on tactical problems, which do not require solution now, especially as we do not know the concrete future circumstances under which these problems may arise? Is not this again the hallmark of dogmatism — policies conceived in separation from the problems with which they are supposed to deal?

What more then of the "advocacy of peaceful transition" as a policy as stated by the Resolution? Is it that Communists are not advocates of the methods of terroristic conspiracy? But this does not call for rejecting as no longer valid any of the theories of Marxism-Leninism. From the beginning, Marx and Engels made the position clear on this point. That our enemies — the ruling class — caricature us as "bomb throwers", and "saboteurs", etc., is to be expected. The only answer we can make is to teach Marxism-Leninism on the question and, by our daily behavior, refute these slanders against us.

What else? It is said that the "transition" will be "peaceful" if the monopolists have been rendered too weak to put up any state power opposition. First of all, what possible shred of evidence or reasonable

hypothesis can be produced to show that the ruling class will not use every last bit of its state power, however little, to cling to its position to the very extreme bitter end? The revisionists are silent to this question. Second, then, the Resolution cites as support another hypothesis: "Titanic economic and political struggles will intervene in our country before" the revolution ("transition"). Thereby the monopoly power to resist "could be drastically curbed through the election of anti-monopoly government. That is why ... the possibility exists for the peaceful and constitutional transition to socialism." (Quotes from the Resolution, emphasis mine.)

Note those emphasized words: The titanic economic and political struggles are certain to come. But the "curbing by elections" and the "peaceful transition" these, only "possibly could." The first is definite, the second is speculative.

Does it not follow logically, then, that the conduct of titanic pre-transition anti-monopoly struggles does not at all depend upon the speculative possibilities about "peaceful transition" of the kind talked of in the Resolution? Those who reject the Resolution's presentation of this question of peaceful transition, therefore, cannot properly be charged with rejecting in any way the anti-monopoly coalition and its titanic struggles. At the same time, it is true, that Marxism-Leninism teaches that the strategy and tactics of that general struggle do derive best from the understanding of the inevitability, not the mere possibility, of socialism at the end of the road.

On the other hand, the advocates of the Resolution seem to be making the acceptance of the mere possibility, not inevitability, of "peaceful transition" idea, the best origin from which to derive the strategic and tactical line of the titanic struggles against imperialism. To make a

certainty dependent upon a speculative possibility (and that not even proved!) — that is what some would call "abstractionism."

Take another look at these "titanic struggles. " Why will they ever become that way, i.e., "titanic"? For two reasons: One, because the masses driven by necessity demand certain changes. Two, equally as much, because the ruling class does not want these changes. Do the advocates of the Resolution desire to say that this conscienceless U.S. imperialist ruling class will permit itself to be "curbed" without at least strenuous attempts to resort to violence, as did the southern slave-owners a hundred years ago, or as Franco did, or as the British in Guiana? Certainly it cannot be denied that the possibility is at least as likely that such ruling class actions would lead to violence, as in these cases cited from history, as that the opposite would happen, in absolutely unprecedented fashion.

Now, if we make such very possible violent actions a condition of advancing to the stage of socialist transition, then does it not then all become reduced to a matter of violent opposition, earlier, rather than later? Does not then "the peaceful transition" to socialism become not the possibility of advance without violence, but of the possibility that the main struggle, perhaps violent, will come on issues short of socialism but leading toward it?

This is not to say, for all of that, that there is nothing new which needs to be said on the basis of Marxist-Leninist theory of the state in regard to this question. The chances of achieving a relatively peaceful revolution and the establishment of a United States workers and farmers government (a dictatorship of the proletariat) have become more realistic since and due to the United Nations victory in World War II. I would cite the following main reasons, without any claim to originality at all:

a) The resources of U.S. capitalism are greatly weakened. Its economic resources are more restricted; likewise its political resources. Today, it could not sustain a long civil war by reliance upon the rest of the world, which is now in its majority socialist and national liberationist.

b) The socialist, and doubtless, too, the national liberationist, groups of nations would lend moral and diplomatic support of an unprecedented kind inside and outside of the United Nations.

c) Fascism suffered an irreparable defeat in World War II. German fascism — "the spearhead of international counter-revolution" (Dimitroff) — was smashed. Such a fact is bound to ease mankind's forward march to socialism. U.S. imperialism, though in itself stronger than fascist German monopoly capital was, still is not "riding the wave" of the future. The mass appeal of fascism will never be the same again.

d) Not only fascism, but reactionary policies in general, stand in specific extreme peril from the developing Negro liberation movement for democratic equal rights in the United States, particularly in the South. Any general weakening of the important Jim Crow sections of the foundation of U.S. reaction, provides new opportunities for the advance toward socialism.

Yes, the prospect for a relatively peaceful transition to socialism in the United States are shining brighter than before. But that one word "relatively" in this context makes a world of difference! It means that while the resort to violence by the capitalists is sure and certain to come, the advancing general crisis of world capitalism has enhanced the power of the workers as their allies to minimize this violence. The other point of view, that of the Resolution, is silent on the sure and certain resort to violence by

the monopolists of the United States, thus ushering in, once more, the well known idea of American exceptionalism to the laws of the class struggle.

XII. CONCLUSION

Again, one sees that the Resolution is not a Marxist-Leninist document, because it shies away from the "main thing in Marxism," its theory of the class struggle.

15

We have all heard condemnations of "name-calling" as a substitute for fair argument. Of all the name-calling, the most profane, I submit, is to call Marxism- Leninism a "dogma." Such slanders against Marxism-Leninism are the mark of those who want to abandon this revolutionary science as not being "popular" (never mind how proven sound it is!) — and, of course, it is **easier** to justify abandoning a "dogma" than a science.

March 1st, 1957