

Some Aspects of the Hungarian Situation

by GEORGE BLAKE CHARNEY

I VOTED to adopt the letter of the National Committee to the membership on the Hungarian situation. This I did notwithstanding the fact that it left open the question of the Soviet actions on the weekend of Nov. 3. The statement, "We do not seek to justify, neither do we join in condemnation," was not an effort to reconcile conflicting views, but rather to provide an acceptable basis for the continuation of the debate on this aspect and its consequences.

For myself, I do not agree that this action was a "supreme revolutionary necessity" as Comrade Foster puts it, or a "grim necessity" as many insist. I am far from persuaded that there was an imminent and overriding danger of a fascist coup d'etat or that the Soviet Union had no other alternative.

Whatever view one had on this question, the long-term value of the letter lies in its forthright approach to the basic factors that gave rise to the crisis in Hungary. What has profoundly shaken our membership has been the crisis itself; and how to explain to ourselves, our friends and the American people the outbreak of a mass popular revolt against a Communist regime.

ONLY A SHORT TIME AGO, Khrushchev in his original report at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union spoke of the transformation of socialism into a world system as the "main feature of our era". He presented a glowing picture of the "all-round development and peaceful trend" of the socialist countries and stated that "the peoples living conditions are steadily improving; culture is flowering". He asserted that "the socialist system is marching forward triumphantly without crisis or upheavals."

We greeted this analysis, and from our embattled position in the United States drew strength from it. We never doubted its accuracy. And yet eight months later, we witness "crisis and upheaval" in two of the Peoples Democracies!

Some comrades argue that the situation exploded as a result of Khrushchev's revelations of the Stalin regime—that at best they were ill conceived and ill-timed—that a slower process of criticism and correction would have served to ease the transition from the old to the new. Whatever the merits of this view, it is nevertheless clear that the situation in the Peoples Democracies did not accord with the rosy picture presented at the 20th Congress. Far from it. This shocking contrast between appearance and reality makes imperative an analysis of the factors that produced the upheavals with their profound impact on the socialist world and the Communist parties of every country.

I believe in this respect the analysis contained in the letter of the NC is helpful.

1. TO BEGIN WITH, the main responsibility for the difficulties that arose in the Peoples Democracies especially in Poland and Hungary is placed with the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. There are some comrades who equivocate on this issue; and at every critical turn in the recent cycle of events beginning in Poland, have shied away from basic criticism of the role of the Soviet Union.

Thus Comrade Dennis' qualifications of the Nov. 1 statement of the National Committee is based on the fact that it "minimized the primary responsibility of the Communist parties of Poland and Hungary for the erroneous policies they pursued in the past and their direct responsibility for influencing the recent course of events in their own countries—one way in Poland, another in Hungary" (Daily Worker, Nov. 5)

Comrade Dennis fails to take note of the frank admissions made by the Soviet Union itself on this score in its declaration of Oct. 30. He speaks of the "one way"

pursued in Poland and another in Hungary. True; but doesn't this very fact prove the opposite on the issue of primary responsibility.

IS IT NOT TRUE that Poland in the recent period began to pursue an independent course and actively resisted interference by the Soviet Union with its program of democratization and national sovereignty?

Is it not true that the Party and government in Poland made one estimate of Poznan—that it represented basically a popular demonstration against oppressive conditions—and that the Soviet Union made a different estimate that it represented the machinations of imperialist agents? In the former case the conclusion was the need to suppress this uprising as counter-revolutionary.

It was because the Central Committee in Poland took a correct position that Gomulka could win the ear of the masses and argue as he did that "the Poznan workers did not protest against socialism when they went out into the streets. They protested against the evil which grew widely in our life, against the deformation of basic principles of socialism."

It was this course which prevented the upheaval in Poland from moving over to a revolt outside of the CP against the CP—that isolated reaction and consolidated popular support for the regime. Its strong stand for independence and equality made it possible to maintain fraternal relations with the USSR, which otherwise could have been seriously undermined.

BUT IT is true, as the letter of the National Committee says, that "Hungarian Communist Party on the other hand did not grasp in time the need for deep going change." Why?

In my opinion because it was still bound to the Soviet Union and the wrong policies it imposed on Hungary in the past. Gero did what Gomulka did not—he accepted the Soviet estimate of Poznan and acted accordingly when similar demonstrations took place in Budapest; and with disastrous consequences.

That is why I find it impossible to accept the approach of Suslov in his Nov. 7 speech or the Pravda article of Nov. 23 which places the main and overriding responsibility on the Hungarian Communist Party. Neither can I accept the indirect manner in which Comrade Dennis arrives at the same conclusion.

The Oct. 30 declaration came too late. Up to the last moment, the Soviet Union continued to view the upheaval in Poland and Hungary as counter-revolutionary acts that had to be suppressed. The "tragic error" committed by Soviet troops when they fired on demonstrators in Budapest on Oct. 24 was the inevitable result of this estimate. One error led to the other.

2. THE SPECIFIC nature of the errors committed by the Soviet Union in its relations with the Peoples Democracies in the past calls for detailed and thoughtful analysis by Marxists everywhere. The letter of the National Committee ascribed the deterioration of conditions in general to the distortions of socialist policy in the latter years of Stalin's rule. It referred in addition to the aggravating effect of the cold war.

However, I believe the root of the problem is related to the process of political and social development in the Peoples Democracies and the role of the Soviet Union in this process.

People's Democracy—this represented a new and challenging concept in the history of revolutionary change. As Lenin foresaw each country would find its own path—that conditioned by new historical experience it would be a process radically different from that pursued by the Bolsheviks in 1917. State power in the Peoples Democracies was based not on one party



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but on a coalition of parties. It operated through a parliamentary system as distinct from Soviets.

The Peoples Democracies had passed through two stages. In the beginning they represented an advanced form of bourgeois democratic revolution. Around 1947-49 they moved over to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the socialist revolution. However, the question arises on the nature of the transition in the second stage, that is to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Was this transition to a socialist path of development and under the leadership of the Communist Party based in the relationship of forces in these countries? Did these changes command the support of the working class majority of the people? To what extent were the main class forces of the coalition on which the regime rested carried along; or were vital relations ruptured in the process? Was the transition premature?

IN HUNGARY, for example, the elections in 1947 gave the Smallholders Party 57 percent of the vote. The Communist Party vote was 17 percent. Is it likely that by 1949, two years later, political relations had altered so radically in favor of a Communist regime?

I do not presume to know the facts in this crucial turn events in Eastern Europe. Hence I can only speak tentatively. It appears to me that in Hungary, at least, and perhaps elsewhere in the Peoples Democracies, the transition to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the form defined by Stalin with the dominant power of the Communist Party was heavily influenced, if not dictated, by considerations of the cold war.

These changes occurred after the organization of the Cominform and the estimate by Zhdanov of the two conflicting world camps. Hence, these changes took place not on the basis of a favorable situation in the particular countries but on the basis of an unfavorable situation in the world.

Though I recognize the acute and formidable problem that the Soviet Union faced, I do not believe, however, that this transition and in the form taken was made imperative by the cold war—or that it bolstered the fight for world peace. The Peoples Democracies were sufficiently strong, from all the evidence, to contain the enemy within and resist the penetration of imperialist influence from abroad. I believe they might have served as a stronger force in world affairs in attracting the emerging neutralist nations and neutralist elements in capitalist nations had they pursued a more normal and independent course of development without being absorbed so precipitously into a solid bloc under Soviet hegemony.

What price was paid for the dissolution of the broad democratic coalition in these countries . . . or for the forced program of socialization?

One of the main results of this premature transition in the dictatorship of the proletariat was to rob the peoples democracies of its

unique revolutionary features; the existence and combination of parties; the parliamentary system as a vital reflection of the interplay of class, group and national interests. Thus what originated as an historically valid and new path of social progress became distorted in the course of these events to the point where it closely approximated and followed Russian revolutionary experience.

3. THE LETTER of the National Committee makes a major point in its discussion of the 20th Congress and its estimate of the ensuing struggle on the issues of the independence of parties, national sovereignty and democratic reform. The letter states:

"It is apparent in the light of recent developments in Poland and Hungary that the implementation met with considerable resistance within the CPSU and other Parties."

I believe this resistance continues. In this connection, Comrade Dennis in his reservations on the National Committee statement of Nov. 1 has this to say:

"In noting the harmful consequences of the past mistakes by the USSR in its relations with Poland and Hungary—especially those which developed under Stalin's leadership—the NC statement does not appreciate the steps being taken to rectify the previous unequal and incorrect relationships between the respective governments and Communist Parties. In this respect, the NC statement does not fully grasp the profound significance of the Oct. 31 declaration of policy of the Soviet Union."

Similarly Pravda in its article on Tito's speech on Nov. 23 argued that past errors on the issues of independence "are being corrected in all decisiveness by our government." It characterizes as "strange and entirely far-fetched" the reproach of Tito that the proper relations established between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were not extended to other socialist nations. It cites as proof the joint statement between the USSR and Poland and its earlier declaration of Oct. 30.

Isn't it rather strange and far-fetched to cite examples of such recent date after the upheavals in Poland and Hungary, to prove that

the line of the 20th Congress was being implemented "in all decisiveness" by the CPSU? At best the reference to the declaration of Oct. 30 as proof is equivocal in light of what followed. The statement by itself tends to refute this allegation by Pravda. The example of the agreement with Poland, while all to the good, is even more difficult to justify as proof, in view of the manifest distrust of Gomulka and the Polish Central Committee by Soviet leaders in the period of its crisis.

Can Comrade Dennis reconcile his statement with the events in Poland?

4. THE CRISIS in Hungary can be settled only on this basis and in the spirit of the Oct. 30 declaration.

Whatever one may think of the actions of the Soviet Union on the weekend of Nov. 3, it is clear that Soviet occupation of Hungary cannot solve the situation.

Recent statements by the Soviet government and repeated in Pravda express a readiness to withdraw as soon as the situation is stabilized. Well and good. Could not the Soviet Union relieve its position by a bold approach to the people of Hungary—now?

If the danger of a fascist coup under Mindszenty was the compelling reason for Soviet intervention on Nov. 3, can it be said that the same situation prevails at this time?

From some accounts it appeared that the workers' organizations were passive during the crucial days of the outbreak and in the days of the white terror. That cannot be said today. Factory councils have been established in Budapest and throughout Hungary, including the traditional proletarian strongholds of Csepel and Pecs. The general strike has been conducted for several weeks by the workers through these councils. They are the decisive force in the national movement. Surely it will not be said that they favor a fascist regime.

The newspapers have indicated that in the course of negotiations between the Kadar government and the factory councils there was agreement that general elections be opened only to those parties which would preserve the socialist

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Jensen Heckles Critic Of N. Y. Segregation

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 2.—A public clash over New York school integration developed here between William Jansen, superintendent of schools, and Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, City College psychology professor.

While Clark was speaking from the platform during an integration conference, Jansen, who had spoken earlier, leaped up and loudly disputed Clark's facts.

Clark told delegates to the National Association of Integration Relations Officers:

"As a citizen of New York, I am disturbed—as I am sure Dr. Jansen would be—about the possibility that cities like Louisville, Washington and Baltimore might now or in the near future have a higher proportion of (integrated) children than such northern cities as New York, Chicago or Philadelphia.

"According to a recent report, over 70 percent of the children attending public elementary and junior high schools in New York City do not have an opportunity to come in contact with children of a different color."

At this moment Jansen leaped up from his seat on the speakers' platform and cried, "That's completely false!"

Clark said his figures had come from a report by the Public Education Association. Jansen, visibly irritated, retorted:

"It would be hard to find a school in New York City where one can't find three or four children of

another color." As he sat down, Jansen aimed this last remark to Clark: "We'll settle this around a conference table in New York."

Dr. Clark's research on segregation's damage to children buttressed the NAACP case that won the historic 1954 Supreme Court ruling to integrate public schools. It was his charge that New York schools discriminate against Negro and Puerto Rican children that led to the PEA study.

Last year, the PEA reported: "Of the city's 639 elementary and junior high schools, 445, or 71 percent, enroll 90 percent or more Negro and Puerto Rican children or 90 percent or more children of other ethnic origins."

While it reported no "intentional" segregation, the PEA said the N. Y. school board has been slow in meeting the problem. There are 259 schools in fringe areas that can be easily integrated, the report stated.

After Clark had finished speaking, Jansen followed him to a nearby room to discuss the matter. Clark explained, "Maybe you didn't understand me. I said 70 percent of the children, not schools."

"That makes the figure worse," Jansen said, and walked out.

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regime. What may have justified one course then, on Nov. 3, justifies another course today.

In the joint statement between the Polish and Soviet parties on Nov. 18, the following was said:

"Both delegations express their confidence that the Hungarian working class and the whole Hungarian nation will discover enough power in themselves to defend the achievements of the people's democratic system."

I say good. Demonstrate this confidence by leaving the situation to the Kadar government and the workers—let them establish a government of their own choice that would command popular support—end the present unhappy, dangerous situation and restore peace and order in Hungary. I am sure it lies within their power with the aid of the Soviet Union to prevent the mass influx of fascist elements in this period of transition.

PERHAPS such a new government would not have the same relationship to the USSR as the other People's Democracies or Poland for that matter. It may even adopt a neutral course between the East and the West. This is far better than the forced continuance of a regime faithful to the Soviet Union but which is estranged from its people. It could very well be that in time, with the fraternal assistance of the Soviet Union, other socialist nations and the general implementation of the 20th Congress—the situation will change again and a solid bond created which would heal old wounds and create new amity.

We are concerned that a weakening of the socialist states and the prestige of the Soviet Union may weaken the peace coalition and that further deterioration along this line can affect the positive relation of world forces registered at Geneva.

We are concerned that the situation makes it easier for the Knowlands to inflame pro-war sentiment. It also facilitates the subversive operations of reaction, especially Project X.

We are concerned about the impact of these developments on our fellow countrymen's view of socialism, hence on the fight for the acceptance of socialist ideas in America.

We must make it our task to see that through this critical testing we will emerge more firmly grounded as American Marxists dedicated to the interests of our people, hence more effective in advancing the common interests of the working class and people's movements throughout the world for peace, democracy, national liberation and Socialism.