

Don't Forget Our Own Tasks

BROOKLYN.

Editor, Daily Worker:

Several friends and I are troubled by some of the letters—and editorial columns—on U. S. Marxists and Soviet self-criticism. We are afraid the writers will grow so absorbed in this discussion that the effective role of the left in the political life of our country will become paralyzed.

Three recent events have dramatized the turbulence beneath the surface in America. These are the Westnighouse strike, the Montgomery boycott and the Minnesota primary. They call for deep thought and effective, flexible Marxist leadership—more than some Daily Columnists have given to date.

It is no secret the left has been hit hard ideologically by recent events in the Soviet Union. Evidently too few of us took seriously enough the full meaning of Soviet statements over many years that there can be no export of revolution.

The discussion of the 20th Congress of the CPSU will be all to the good if we do not allow our movement to become panicked, paralyzed or divided. It will be easier and more effective for us to approach this time of examination in the light of American's own needs for peace, full democracy and socialism.

—J. C.

The Negro Question

Editor, Daily Worker:

One of the great lessons of the 20th Congress of the CPSU is that Marxists must be constantly developing a creative approach to the problems of life and struggle; that theory must be a guide to action but cannot become a dogma which binds; and that they must not hesitate to re-evaluate past theories and, if necessary, discard them, when they no longer correspond to reality.

It is in this spirit that I believe a fundamental reappraisal of the theoretical approach to the Negro question in the U. S. is essential. Using Stalin's work on the national question as a theoretical guide, we have characterized the Negro people in the South as an oppressed nation—and the struggle for freedom one for "national libera-

tion." The concept of a nation is the furthest thing from the minds of just about every Negro in this country, except for those in the Communist Party. Moreover, among Negro Communists there are many more doubts on this question than there are among white Communists. And why? Because the characterization of the Negro people of the Black Belt in the South as a separate nation (with its inherent right of self-determination) is a basic departure from reality.

The concept is alien to the American scene and repugnant to practically all Americans—both Negro and white. Furthermore, I believe that a thoroughly close examination of the actual facts of Negro majority through the black belt will reveal only the most tenuous basis for conceiving of this stretch of land as the territory of the Negro nation.

The shameful oppression of the Negro people in America is a disgrace to our country. Great new American heroes are being forged in the current struggles in Montgomery, Tuscaloosa and Mississippi. Let us win the American working class to the fight for school integration, against jimcrow transportation, for the ballot and, fundamentally, for the land—and we will not have to worry about a separate "national" question.

The Negro-Labor alliance will lead the way in a new people's government of "one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

STEVE M.

Time for Basic Education

Editor, Daily Worker:

The events in recent days on the USSR seem to me to offer some lessons and opportunities.

I do not refer to matters concerning which mature judgment must wait upon the publicizing of facts not so far disclosed. I would merely observe for the moment that Marxism and the National and Colonial Question stands on its own feet, regardless of the author's errors or various points and policies over a whole lifetime of activity. Let us reflect that the bibliography of Marxist classics still, and properly, includes certain contributions of Karl Kautsky and George Plekhanov.

Letters from Readers

Following are more letters in the current discussion of American Marxists and the Soviet Union. Letters over 300 words cannot be printed in full.

What is the opportunity now? Obviously, I suggest, there is a stirring that demands answers and cries for a major effort to spread the teachings of Marxism. I cannot believe that a working class, particularly a youth, possessed of the party principles as expounded by Lenin, would stand for deviations from democratic centralism.

Now is the time to organize study circles, correspondence courses, and so forth. Away with the notion that any of our press is the private preserve of the editor, who will publish only what he agrees with if the writer is not his administrative superior. Let us tap the great well of curiosity and be ready for even greater opportunities that are coming.—S. A.

A Letter from Howard Fast

The following letter was received by Joseph Clark from Howard Fast:

Dear Joe Clark:

I was impelled to write to you because, among many excellent and thoughtful things appearing in the Daily, your "The Unchanging Times" in today's paper is outstanding. It is a clear, direct and lucid piece of thinking and I for one appreciate it enormously. This is precisely the kind of chapter and verse approach that we do all too infrequently.

I would like to add one comment of my own for your consideration. No one in his right mind, observing the course of Soviet foreign policy during the past three years, can fail to comprehend that the Soviet Union and the world camp of socialism as a whole has made a vast step forward.

It is inherent in the dynamics of error that the correction must take as its premise an admission of error. The process of admis-

sion is the other side of the coin. The process of correction is the face of it. If there were no errors there would be no self-criticism and no correction. There would also be no life and no motion.

As a steady reader of the paper it would see to me that perhaps we are becoming a little too deeply concerned over the error. The major concern it seems to me should be for the process of correction.

As Lenin pointed out, one of the basic differences between a Marxist movement and a capitalist movement is that the former contains within itself the dynamic for correction of error. We ourselves in America still have a criminal feeling about error. I don't have to expound on this to you. I think you know exactly what I mean.

How many people have we both known who have felt that the admission of an error is the one unforgivable sin. Perhaps I am being subjective, for I will admit that I have piled up as neat a score of error as anyone around, and I intend to continue to do so. The only alternative, at least in my case, is immobility.

Perhaps I have said this poorly and certainly not in all the detail I should. I come back to that brilliant editorial Mark Ethridge wrote in 1944—reviewing the Roosevelt era. He began by saying, "For what in hell should we apologize?" It seems to me to be to the point.

—HOWARD FAST

Basis Laid for Tremendous Gains

Editor, Daily Worker:

Our serious concentration and devotion to scientific socialism makes us overlook certain details which not infrequently develop right under our eyes. That makes us imperfect, but very human nevertheless.

The main points are not to lose sight of the objective, to keep morale high, not to waiver, to maintain the sense of responsibility at all times, to profit by mistakes and not to be perturbed by the diverting tactics of enemies.

The criticism to which Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan among others have subjected the late Stalin came as no jolt to me, but instead of a sort of pleasant

surprise. Stalin served as a maximum leader during trying periods in the USSR. He performed great tasks and also made tremendous mistakes; the most serious of which was allowing that creature Beria to influence him.

It is my belief that Beria was behind every colossal blunder that Stalin made. What prevented the USSR from failing were the greatness of scientific socialism, the devotion of its people, and also the determination of Joseph Stalin in spite of Beria's influence.

Nevertheless, fabulous advancement was accomplished during Stalin's time considering his mistakes and Beria. If these advancements took place notwithstanding the drawbacks mentioned can we imagine the tremendous steps forward that will come in the near future both inside and outside the Soviet Union? These developments will comfort, justify and benefit the people no end and will jolt the big capitalists to the marrow of their faltering bones.—R.A.

Why Not Abolish Capital Punishment?

Editor, Daily Worker:

I think whoever wrote that letter criticizing Clark's report of Stalin's funeral was all wet. He reported what he saw: mass grief. I really don't see why we should particularly be kicking ourselves because we weren't hep to Stalin's weaknesses: How were we to know from a distance how deeply they had fallen into the rut of the cult of personality?

"I used to throw off a critical comment now and then about the idolatry—but I'd always shrug it off with: So, they like it that way, and they're doing OK, so why should I get all heated up about it? And the fact remains that they have done OK—and only now that they are doing even more suprelatively, with leadership on the collective basis we used to assume it was always on, can we imagine that they might possibly have done even better. But really, how were we supposed to divine that they were violating democratic centralism as badly as we ourselves?"

Incidentally, I still do get all heated up on the question of capital punishment. Now that they've noted abuses, have they suggested abolishing it?—H. B.