

Dear Editor

Letters from Readers

Further Thoughts on Soviet Bonds

Dear Editor:

Regretfully, I find it necessary to take up Joseph Clark's comments (May 19) on a May 5 column of mine which the Sunday Worker wrongly titled "Those Soviet Bonds." The wide press given in the United States to the USSR's decision to postpone payments on certain government bonds purchased by its people induced the subject of that column, which would have been more appropriately titled: "Those American Bonds and Savings."

Clark objects to my description of the way the purchasing power of bonds and savings in this country dropped because he'd "hate to have American workers judge socialism by this kind of comparison." A reader of his column, who didn't see mine, would take it I argued that postponement on payment on bonds for 20 years is one of the great attractions of socialism. I only took off on the subject to deal with bonds closer home. On the Soviet bonds, I only suggested we "keep our minds open on the subject" before jumping to conclusions.

Second, I see no reason why a Marxist in a capitalist country should consider himself in any way restrained in describing and exposing injustices under capitalism—his No. 1 obligation—simply because there are, or are alleged to be, disagreeable things in a country of socialism.

Third, the subject was most directly posed to me by a column of the very conservative financial writer of the World-Telegram (April 22), Lawrence Fertig. Writing on the Soviet bonds, he conceded that in America, too, "a great part of people's savings are eaten away by inflation, which is really a form of partial confiscation." Can a believer in socialism say less?

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BUT MOST OTHER apologists for capitalism were not as frank as Mr. Fertig. They swung out against the Soviet Union as though everything is perfect in the U.S.A. The authoritative National City Bank letter for May, for example, very boastful of the way debts and bonds are honored in this country, titles its comments: "Bankruptcy a la Russe." The Bank says "the capitalist has no

difficulty of interpreting a Soviet confession of bankruptcy," and adds "it merely confirms that Russians long ago had given up the idea that Soviet government promises were of any value."

Whatever one may think of the USSR's announcement on the bonds, conclusions such as those drawn by the National City Bank and others are an attempt to discourage any dealings with the USSR. They need to be answered by Marxists here. I don't think Clark's answer that "the Soviet Union decided not to pay on bonds falling due because it doesn't have the money" is the answer. Nor can we be satisfied with his assertion that "the Soviet Union doesn't have the money because of the enormous investments it makes in industrial growth" and because of "the great expense of the arms race."

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SO I TURN to someone who knows more than I or Clark on the subject—to Nikita Khrushchev. In his May 7 speech before the Supreme Soviet he said:

"Many bourgeois statesmen spread all sorts of ideas on our decision on the loans. They affirm that our decision is the result of a difficult financial situation in the Soviet Union. But these are all old songs. The financial situation of our country is strong. The steps on the loans were carried out in the interest of the people and in the interest of the government because those measures will serve for a further vigorous rise in the country's economy, a rise in the living standards of the Soviet people; they will give the government from year to year the possibility to expand the means for construction of homes, schools, hospitals and other institutions for the advancement of our life and culture and for the expansion of the output of consumer goods so as to more fully satisfy the needs of the Soviet people."

People who sing praises to capitalism, said Khrushchev, cannot understand why the Soviet people support the proposal. These people don't understand:

"The Soviet people have been brought up in the spirit of Communist consciousness, that the welfare of each individual depends on the welfare of our entire society

... Our people don't strive to accumulate for their own individual enrichment. When they subscribed to the loans, they supported the government, they did so consciously because these means were directed for the development of the Soviet economy ..."

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HE FURTHER observed that both youth and older people joined in support of the proposal because in the recent period they received tangible evidence of new benefits coming from such general progress: the new greatly improved pension payments; increased pay for students; lifting of the scales of those in lower wage categories; shortening of the workday on Saturday and pre-holiday workdays; longer time off with pay for women before and after birth. And the universal seven-hour day (six hours underground) is to go into effect soon.

Clark says the Soviet people are simply glad they won't have to subscribe to any more loans. That's part of the story. But Khrushchev stressed a far more important consideration that evidently won popular support. The USSR is currently developing a vast economic reorganization in preparation for a new historic leap in her economy. The action on the loans is related to the general plan.

The Soviet leaders hold that the use of the money immediately to further this advance could in the long run do far more good for

the Soviet people than if the money were paid them now, as the USSR could, when there is still a scarcity of many of the things they'd want to buy. As matters stand now, a Soviet citizen has to wait many months, even years to get into a new home, or buy a car or other such things. Under such circumstances, possession of his money does not figure as importantly with him as money may be to an individual in economically far more developed U.S.

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To summarize: I don't propose to take to street corner meetings to tell Americans that one of the beauties of socialism is loans to governments that are not paid when due: On the contrary, I hold that a country with the productive development of America wouldn't even have to float loans, much less postpone payments upon them, to provide a socialism that is far closer to our dreams than may be in sight for the present generation in the Soviet Union.

GEORGE MORRIS

Disagrees With Mike On Howard Fast

Editor, The Worker:

Though I am a staff member, I am also a "reader" and try to be a builder of the paper, so I'd like to comment in this space on Mike Gold's column of June 2 in which he throws in a reference to Howard Fast as one "who has just been converted



back to New York Times democracy" and discovers that Fast wasn't really much of a writer after all ("Everyone is always being very noble in the usual Fast novel" etc).

Before I make my point, let me clearly state that I disagree, and disagreed at the time, with many of the things Fast said when he left the Communist Party, with the manner he chose to present it, and most of all with his lack of logic as an advocate of socialism in leaving the largest party for American socialism, a party with decades of noble historic achievements behind it, and one which is at least TRYING to get away from past mistakes which hampered it, and hampered the fight for socialism.

Criticize Fast as one may, he is still someone who stated in his interview with the Worker on his reasons for leaving the CP (Mar. 10) that he remains "more deeply than ever" for socialism. This is not New York Times democracy, whatever that is. He added his plans "to go on fighting with all my strength against perversions of democracy here of which there are no small number".

I'll leave it to Mike Gold, on a less hasty second thought, whether these are the words of someone "converted back to New York Times democracy". The Times, in spite of some notable anti-McCarthy liberalism, is and always has been a persistent, unprincipled enemy of socialism all over the world.

Isn't it a bit foolish in 1957 to try to make enemies of Americans like Howard Fast, in or out of the C.P.?

LESTER RODNEY

Has Other Thoughts On Art Criticism

NEW YORK

Dear Editor:

Michael Gold's article, "Mystery of the Lady with Two Noses" exhibits certain qualities of criticism common to artistic criticism from the left; criticism which is often meaningless. I most certainly agreed when he said that modern art has cajoled and influenced young artists in many harmful ways.

Mr. Gold however, has made certain critical judgments which are untenable in the light of the history of art. Also, if his antagonism to contemporary influences upon the artist are that they have confused artists and led them into aesthetic sterility,

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then his attacks upon modern art in general are just not to the point . . .

My main objection to art criticism from the left is that it says, "Modern painting contains little hope. . . ." There is no reason why an artist must see things in terms of progress when he believes that modern society is in fact the very antithesis of ethical and intellectual progress. Many writers have written fine

works of art which serve as sensitive judgments upon modern society, such as Joyce's *Dubliners*, which do not speak of hope or progress.

The people must be educated. They must learn of the mediocrity and sterility of bourgeois life and culture. They must also learn the language of modern art of Picasso, Mondrian, Kandinsky. We have no right to condemn a language because we do not speak it.

A STUDENT