

BOOKS

Aptheker Book on Hungary Explores 1956 Uprising

(Al Richmond, veteran labor journalist, is executive editor of the People's World of San Francisco and a member of the National Committee of the Communist Party. He was one of the five California Smith Act defendants acquitted by the recent historic decision of the U. S. Supreme Court.)

By AL RICHMOND

The essential truth about Hungary, as Herbert Aptheker sees it, is summarized in a key passage of his book:

"... the fundamental sources of upheaval were the machinations and pressures of imperialism, but decisive to the actual outburst of that upheaval were the errors on the part of those charged with building and safeguarding socialism."

He explores ramifications and complexities, but that assertion is the central theme, and the book is a presentation of evidence and argument to sustain that theme.

The evidence is most impressive that during last October's uprising the most serious danger developed of a successful counter-revolution, of a clerical-fascist restoration.

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APTHEKER TRACES the roots of this danger in the monstrous proportions assumed by feudalism, clericalism, fascism, anti-Semitism and just plain chauvinism in pre-



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war Hungary; in the stubborn, unceasing resistance of the old ruling classes and their retainers to every step in the direction of socialism.

He traces the roots in the logic and politics of the cold war, and their specific manifestations in the elaborate apparatus of subversion, espionage and counter-revolution directed from the United States.

Finally, he spotlights the fruits stemming from those roots, as they appeared in the 12 days (Oct. 23-Nov. 4) that shook Hungary.

His array of facts serves to render untenable the position of those who pooh-pooh the restorationist danger. Such people might, therefore, find a simple analysis and a black and white judgment, but only at the expense of coming to grips with realities.

Recognizing, as I believe one must, an ominous and formidable threat of a clerical-fascist restoration, some thorny problems still remain. The nature of these is suggested by the second half of Aptheker's thesis, the one about failings of the Hungarian government leadership.

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IT IS this that gives the Oct. 23 movement its dual, contradictory character, bracketing in confusion those who sought the swift elimination of the failings of the regime, and those who wished to overthrow the regime (and I use "regime" not in terms of specific personalities, but in terms of its fundamental socialist character). The thorniest questions are:

• Was it possible to rally the forces of socialism, most specifically

the positive elements of the Oct. 23 movement, quickly enough and in sufficient strength to nip the counter-revolution?

• Was military intervention by the Soviet Union the only means for preventing a clerical-fascist restoration?

With respect to the last question, Aptheker properly rejects the argument that the overriding issue was Hungarian sovereignty, that if the Hungarian people, left to their own devices, succumbed to, or were overwhelmed by fascism, this would be unfortunate but nonetheless an exercise of their absolute right to self-determination.

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SUCH VIEW is not only a departure from Marxism, but a retreat from the advanced democratic position taken at Yalta by such celebrated non-Marxists as Churchill and Roosevelt. No one said at Yalta that a revival of Nazism was the self-determinationist business of the Germans. On the contrary, the allies were pledged at Yalta to uproot every vestige of Nazism, and this was to be a principal mission of the military occupation.

The passage of a decade and the relative smallness of Hungary do not alter the principle involved. If Soviet intervention was the only means of preventing a clerical-fascist restoration, then intervention was a hard necessity. And this in the interests of European security and world peace. A fascist Hungary would be a deadly menace to both.

Was intervention the only means?

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INHERENT in the question is a dilemma. The greater the justification for intervention, the more damning the indictment of previous policies pursued by the Soviet and Hungarian Communist leadership, which reduced the forces of socialism, even though they held state power, to such importance demoralization, confusion and division that they were in danger of being engulfed by counter-revolution.

Inherent in the question, too, are revelations during and since the 20th Soviet Communist Party Congress that forms of compulsion were substituted for methods of persuasion, that the Soviet leadership, in some measure and on some occasions, tended to "great nation chauvinism," which means a contempt for small nations, a dismissal of their importance, a disregard for the internal dynamics of their development.

Given such a background, it is understandable why many people questioned whether the Soviet Union did not resort to military intervention without a sufficient exploration of possible alternatives.

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HERE Aptheker is weakest. He does not really explore the possible alternatives, even if only to prove them unfeasible. In the chaotic and swift movement of last October's events he focuses on the counter-revolutionary elements, on the amazingly rapid rightward shift of the country's institutionalized politics, but he does not sufficiently seek to discern those forces that might have stemmed the counter-revolutionary tide and exactly why they were unable to do so.

Aptheker, for example, skims over the initial Soviet intervention on Oct. 24. From a tactical viewpoint, did intervention serve to stabilize or inflame the situation? Did it strengthen the socialist forces, or did it pour fuel on the counter-revolutionary flames? And if it was correct to intervene at that time, was it not a tragic blunder to withdraw?

It is one thing to attempt a serious and critical assessment of momentous decisions made in the most complex and difficult circumstances. It is another to heap moral imprecations upon the Soviet Union and to attribute its actions to an



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Jago-like propensity for evil. The latter approach does lead to some variant of the so-called policy of "liberation." The former can remain within the framework of the re-examination now in progress in the Marxist movement throughout the world, which should seek to extract all the lessons from every experience.

I say it "can remain" within such a framework—if there is the bedrock recognition that imperialism is the main enemy, in Hungary or elsewhere, and the issue is how best to thwart and beat that enemy.

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Farmer in a Business Suit by John H. Davis and Kenneth Hinshaw, Simon and Schuster. \$3.50

By ERIK BERT

IT IS NOT considered good practice, usually, in reviewing a book, to review the author instead. I think that in the present instance, the exception is justified. Therefore, let us take a look first, at John H. Davis and Kenneth Hinshaw, the authors of "Farmer in a Business Suit."

Davis has been executive secretary of the National Council of Farm Cooperatives; manager of the National Wool Marketing Corp., assistant Secretary of Agriculture in the Eisenhower Administration, president of the Federal Commodity Credit Corporation, and since 1954 the director of the Moffett Program in Business and Agriculture at Harvard Business School.

His predecessor at the Cooperative Council was Ezra Taft Benson, now Secretary of Agriculture. After Davis joined the Department of Agriculture, the Administration secured direct subsidy payments for the wool growers, the only crop for which it supported this program.

Davis is a trustee of the Foundation of American Agriculture, and a member of the Council for Agricultural and Chemurgic Research. His present job at Harvard was established with \$300,000 contributed by the chairman of the Corn Products Refining Co., allegedly to improve the relations between farmers and businessmen.

Japanese Appeal

A TOTAL of 3,981 Japanese delegations from 25 other countries and 10 international organizations took part in the Third Conference for the Prohibition of Atomic Weapons, held in Tokyo, Aug. 11-14. The conference unanimously adopted three resolutions dealing with halting all nuclear tests of the manufacture, stockpiling and use of weapons and other aspects of disarmament as proposals for joint action to achieve these ends.

The text of one of these documents, an appeal to the United Nations and the General Assembly of the United Nations, follows:

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ALL PEOPLES are eager in the face of the relaxation of international tension and the prohibition of atomic weapons.

The cessation of atomic and hydrogen tests is a matter of prime importance at this time for realizing the aspirations of all peoples. The testing of such bombs is intensifying the arms race. As many authorities have warned, it increases the danger of a world war by radioactivity.

The Third International Conference for the Prohibition of Atomic and Hydrogen Weapons and for Disarmament, meeting in Tokyo, Japan, the country which has the