

The American Road to Socialism

By JACK GOLDRING

New Haven, Conn.

ALTHOUGH the discussion now going on in our Party will be of an extended and extensive character, and my thoughts on the many documents now available are still of a formative character, I would like to make a few comments.

It seems to me that there is widespread recognition and agreement with Comrade Dennis that the main character of our errors since 1945 has been largely of a Left-sectarian nature. But having recognized these errors, what troubles me now are certain conclusions that are being drawn by some members and leaders. This is augmented by many developments of the XXth Congress and our reaction to these developments. For example, one state committee member has called for a type of party to replace ours that would closely resemble the A.D.A. in form. I have heard one member calling for scrapping of the Marxist classics "because they do not have any application here." I have heard several people say we should abandon our policy of concentration because it is misunderstood, misinterpreted and

deliberately falsified by enemies of our Party.

It also seems to me that even among some of our national leaders certain estimates of the world situation as made by the XXth Congress are being incorrectly applied to the United States. For example, Comrade Max Weiss, in furthering certain political ideas about the "dictatorship of the proletariat," is now taking to political prediction. It's not enough that we have been shellacked again and again in making economic predictions. Now Weiss is predicting that undoubtedly we will be one of the last countries in the world to go socialist. I don't consider that Marxist thinking. That's just playing a guessing game, and it's being done merely because it helps Weiss develop his argument more effectively. While the world movement of Socialism shows that there may be many paths to Socialism, there is no experience to date that shows it has not been led by the working class under the leadership of a Marxist type of political party. If the working class must give leadership in bringing about Social-

ism, then the working class must give leadership in establishing and consolidating Socialism; in other words, there must be a form of working-class rule. Maybe we don't like the term "dictatorship of the proletariat," but that term is not the important thing. What is important is the fact that we must have a period of working-class rule to establish and consolidate Socialism. The content of this working-class rule will certainly depend on conditions that exist at that time.

I would like to add here that in developing our program for a peaceful transition to Socialism we would be remiss in our duty and would be making a tragic mistake if we did not forewarn the workers about certain peculiarities that the U.S. ruling group is known for. If we are going to rediscover America let's not forget some of its history. It's a history of violent resistance to any change on the part of the capitalist class. In no other important capitalist country has there been such a history of force and violence on the part of the capitalist class in resisting even the most simple gains of the workers and the Negro people. And as we develop our program to achieve Socialism through legislative and constitutional means let us never forget that this ruling class has always created the illegal secret organizations it needed to circumvent the legitimate gains of the people. Remember the Black Legion, the Liberty League, the white supremacy

councils and others.

One of the things that concerns me very much is my fear that our reaction to this extended period of Left-sectarianism will be a complete swing to the other extreme and the creation of a Social-Democratic, reform type of party, not a Marxist party. I say this because since the origin of the CPUSA we have reacted in this manner at all turning points in our history. We are a Party of extremes, the all-or-nothing-at-all, kind of Party. We rejected everything ever associated with Browder at the 1945 convention, not merely Browder's class collaboration policies. The fact is that Browder did make a contribution in focusing the attention of the C.P. on America and its problems. Browder made a serious effort to show how our Party was an American Party and had inherited the best of American tradition and thought. But we had to reject everything Browder had said or done. Now, in his National Committee meeting report, Comrade Weiss talks about rediscovering America.

We also ought to rediscover ourselves. We are immature and impatient. These are some of the reasons for our swings from one extreme to another. Our reactions to the Khrushchev speech on Stalin show it. The Chinese, who may have come close to being victims of Stalin's policies similar to Yugoslavia, nevertheless have a mature, critical attitude on Stalin as shown in the article in

the May *Political Affairs*. We are continuously frustrated in the results we obtain so that we completely discard everything we have been doing in a certain direction and grasp the new as the full answer to our problems without seriously analyzing what we are doing. Remember when we decided that white chauvinism was completely responsible for the failure of our Party to grow among the Negro people. This was it, or so we thought. But we were wrong; this was only a part of it; but before we found this out the cost was high.

Yes, let's rediscover America. We'll find that we're impatient because the American working class doesn't move as fast as we would like it to, or as fast as we think it should. Despite the agitation, education and work done by Foster and the socialist movement for industrial unions, look how long it took before industrial unions were formed, even though the objective situation was ripe for it decades before. And today the trade-union movement is still in the most elementary stages of independent political action, let alone thinking in terms of Socialism. Let's recognize this. We can help move it, we can help educate it, we can make a contribution in advancing it, but we can't determine how and when it should move. (We thought we could in '48.) At the present time the vast majority of American workers don't see any need for Socialism because they think their eco-

nomie conditions are pretty good and can be improved under our present set-up. As a result, we are the only capitalist nation without a mass socialist movement of one kind or another. Yes, there are several small groups of socialist thought in the U.S. and a number of individuals who favor Socialism, but other than that there is a vast void in our country in the ranks of the working class as far as Socialism is concerned. If our slogan about a new mass party of Socialism is a long time perspective I certainly agree with it. But if we think such a party will come into existence in the next year or so, we are under an illusion.

Finally, I would like to say that I agree we need many basic changes in our Party structure, program and methods of working. While I do feel that we don't have the "cult of the individual" here we certainly don't have its counterpart—a collective joint approach to policy and work. By this I mean that within the framework of our Party we don't encourage independence of thinking and a fight for one's viewpoint so that what emerges really represents the best we are capable of. We have to put an end to the idea that we have the one and only correct answer to a particular problem or the one and only tactic to a particular situation. Sometimes there may only be one answer to something, but more often than not there are several approaches to a situation that are equally as good. As a carpenter, I have learned

there may often be several ways of proceeding with a certain phase of construction and each may be equally good. Recently, in the mile race, Bailey ran the mile in less than four minutes, something he had never come near doing before. He ran this

fast because competing against him was Landy, the world's fastest miler. It took Landy to bring out the best in Bailey. We need this kind of friendly competition of ideas and struggle in our Party too, and something better will emerge.