

through administrative controls.

This 15-year arrest of social reform has accumulated a tremendous backlog of unfulfilled social needs. As we move into a period of peaceful co-existence, labor is beginning to take stock of this backlog, for the first time in a decade and a half, without either war time inhibition or cold war disorientation. The liberating effect of this new context is enhanced by labor's newly achieved unity and peak strength. Impulses for an advance along a broad front are building up in labor's ranks and among our people generally. Whatever the outcome of the elections, labor and the people will surely fight to bring a New America into existence.

STAROBIN'S PROPOSALS

In its August 25th issue *The Nation* carried a bleak letter by Joseph Starobin, former *Daily Worker* foreign correspondent, about the Communist Party and its prospects. The letter, in which Starobin publicly dissociates himself from the Communist Party, outlines some rather nebulous perspectives for building a new socialist movement in the United States, to "supersede the Communist Party."

It is regrettable that Starobin left the Party. He is an able journalist with an imaginative and perceptive grasp of unfolding events.

I hope that the conflict of views between Starobin and the Communist Party on some rather basic

matters will not preclude at least a certain degree of fruitful collaboration where identity of outlook still prevails or where it may emerge in the days ahead. In the meantime, a discussion of Starobin's differences with the Party is in order.

Starobin thinks the Communist Party is finished. In it, he sees mainly "victims," "casualties," and impotence. This rather nihilist picture does not convey any appreciation of the dynamics of the present situation in the Party. Reflect on the framework within which Starobin undertakes to place his analysis: what it takes to generate a socialist revival! Is this not something relatively new? When did the Left consider this meaningful before? Not at any time, certainly, since the Cold War.

This outlook has now opened for the Left because of the termination of the Cold War. One period has come to an end; another is getting under way. There is not yet thunder on the Left; but there is new stirring. Hopeful events impend. A socialist revival has been made possible by the way things are going in our country and in the world.

The Communist Party fought bravely to help shape what is now taking on recognizable features. It is summing up the lessons of a ten-year struggle to help bring about what is finally at hand. It faces up soberly to the knowledge that its losses and set-backs were heavy and largely of its own making. A discussion of unprecedented vigor animates

it from top to bottom. Creative energies, long repressed, burst into the open as the past is reviewed, the future probed, the present made preface.

It is a painful and anguished discussion. The emotions which accompany it testify to its depth. Those who are engaged in it will never again be as they were. People are being remade, not only ideas.

But Starobin misses this entirely. He sees only the victims, the casualties, the disabled. And from this he concludes that the Party does not have what it takes.

This is based on a rather strange analysis of the leaders and members of the Communist Party. Of the leaders he says: "Many now realize that the whole perspective was faulty, but they appear to be impotent to put their ideas into practice." As for the membership, Starobin divides them into two categories:

Many rank and file members have been cut off from the country's productive process. . . . Some of these people are aging, and they subsist on loyalties and memories which are not easily dissolved. There is a substantial group, however, perhaps several thousands more, which had begun to come to terms with themselves and with realities quite a while before last February. . . . They cannot alter the Party as such, neither can they dissolve it.

In short, those in the leadership and membership who do not understand the Party's predicament are hopeless; those who do are impotent. With such an estimate, natur-

ally enough, Starobin concludes that American Communists do not have what it takes to generate a socialist revival.

Starobin's letter was written prior to publication of the National Committee's Draft Resolution. This Resolution, which takes into account months of discussion by the membership, is animated with the spirit of change and the deliberate quest for new answers to meet the new times. It is the most incisive refutation of Starobin's opinion that the leaders and members of the Communist Party are impotent to put their ideas into practice. The discussion of the Resolution which is now beginning to get under way will further demonstrate the ability of the membership and leadership to alter their organization in keeping with the needs of American Socialism.

Starobin's misjudgment of the Party's vitality implies a strange view of the nature of the Communist Party. It can only be reconciled with an assumption that there is something built into the Communist Party which tends to put certain limits to its possibility for self-correction, that the Communist Party might suffer the same fate as, for example, befell the Socialist Labor Party. But there is a fundamental difference between the character of the Communist Party and all preceding working-class parties with whose corpses the American radical scene is strewn.

No working-class party, including

the Communist Party, can guarantee against mistakes. But the capacity of other parties for self-correction is always limited in the last analysis by the inherent defects of their fundamental principles. Therefore, the possibility is always inherent that, at one point or another, they may not be able to transcend these limitations. These do not exist in the principles on which the Communist Party is based, because they *require* creative and evolving interpretation and application. The inner Party struggle over policy, which life itself generates, must, therefore, lead in time to the ultimate correction of mistakes.

That is exactly what took place in the Communist Party, although one would not gather so from Starobin's letter. There it appears that the Party persisted in its mistakes for ten years despite a growing realization by certain individuals that many important policies were wrong. Actually, the process of self-correction did not begin this past February. The Party itself—and not merely some individuals—began re-appraising its sectarian estimates and tactics in the winter of 1952-53. The first evidence of this was the resolution on the outcome of the 1952 elections. This process is culminating in, not beginning with, the present discussion.

Starobin proposes that the new movement should not be a political party or even a political action association. His view is that it should

be an educational organization devoted to stimulating controversy. This makes it clear that Starobin not only rejects the Communist Party. He rejects the principle itself of a working class Marxist political party. What he actually proposes is a Fabian-type of socialist propaganda organization.

It is difficult to believe that this is offered seriously as the instrumentality for generating a socialist revival in America. To reject the concept of a Marxist political party—whatever its name or electoral form—represents not a step forward for the socialist movement, but a retrograde step.

Starobin insists that such a movement must be formed without the Communists. The prohibition is, in my opinion, superfluous. It is hard to conceive of Communists clamoring to form it if it is intended to "supersede" the Communist Party. If it is ever formed it might serve as a useful addition to the family of socialist organizations and, as such, Communists would undoubtedly welcome it as they would any socialist-discussion group. But it cannot "supersede" the Communist Party.

The Communist Party needs to be neither dissolved nor "superseded." It needs to be changed in the direction indicated by the Draft Resolution. When that is done, it will play a vital role in helping generate a socialist revival in America.

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