

GILBERT GREEN . . .

I learned the key to the understanding of history which I had not had before. I learned that history is not a crazy-quilt of unrelated historical accidents or the mere recording of the deeds of great men, but a pattern of development, a process of development governed by definite social laws which, if understood by man, would enable him to become a conscious force working for social improvement and social betterment for a better world as against being a blind victim of events.

I learned that history is constantly undergoing changes, that the world we live in today is nothing like the world of 50 years ago or a hundred years ago, that social systems come and go like everything else in life, that the capitalist social system is not eternal, was not always with us nor will it always be with us. . . .

I learned that in modern society under capitalism that the revolutionary class of today, that class whose interests are in harmony with a new change in the social system, is the working class and that the working class has replaced the capitalist class as the revolutionary class in society. The capitalist class was the revolutionary class in the struggle against feudalism at the time of the English Revolution in 1648 and at the time of the American Revolution in 1776, at the time of the French Revolution of 1889—of 1789, of the German Revolution of 1848, but that with the development of capitalism now the

modern working class is the revolutionary class in society.

And it is revolutionary not in the sense that it is conscious of the fact that its historic mission is to bring about a new social system, but because of the objective—its objective place in society, the fact that it, whether it knows it or not, must conduct the struggle to defend its own rights, to earn a decent living, to keep from being completely exploited and oppressed, must conduct this struggle against the economic royalists of today and must, therefore, logically lead in the direction of bringing about a social transformation of society.

I learned that when society is ripe for such social transformation, we have reached a point where the mass of the people can no longer live under the old conditions and must break through the shell of the old in order to build anew, and that if this break-through does not occur, if society does not move forward to a higher rung of social existence, then what happens is that society is pushed backward, begins to decay, begins to disintegrate, begins to rot from within. . . .

However, I also learned that, despite temporary recessions, temporary throw-backs, temporary hindrances and obstacles, that life must assert itself and that sooner or later man does break through and does move from one to another stage of human development, always in the

line of progress, always in the line of human betterment.

And I also learned that, as far as capitalist society is concerned, that this is the first time in the history of human civilization that we now have a state of affairs in which man, through his conquest of nature, through the invention of machinery and tools which can produce an abundance such as we have never known before, can now create a social system without class divisions, a social system in which everyone can truly have what he needs and can create the kind of world in which there need not be any longer class struggles and wars and can usher in a day in which, actually, man begins to be man for the first time instead of being merely a higher form of beast.

I also learned from all this that Marxism-Leninism was a science that explained the world for the first time so that I could understand it, so I could find my place in it. It not only to me meant a scientific grasp of what the world is like and society is like, but it also represented to me a cause, a vision, a dream, something that one could fight for and work for, and I decided to dedicate myself to that, to dedicate myself to the fight for bringing about a better world, a world without exploitation, oppression, without wars, without discrimination, without the ills that we face in modern society today. . . .

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From this* we went into the

whole question of force and violence and the role that it plays in society, and I pointed out that Marxism does study from an historical and theoretical point of view the role of force and violence in human relations and in social change; that Marxism-Leninism, from the theoretical point of view, has drawn a conclusion that when a fundamental social change takes place from one social system to another, it is usually accompanied by violence, but that the violence occurs because the class which is on its way out places violent obstacles in the path of democratic progress and tries to block the further advance of mankind to a higher social system.

And I gave examples in terms of history, that, for example, in the American Revolution that, even after the Continental Congress was established, that the forefathers of this country, this nation of ours, wanted to find a means by which to come to terms with King George of England. In fact, even after the Continental Congress took place, a petition was written by Thomas Jefferson and signed by some of the outstanding men of that day, pledging their fealty and loyalty to King George, and stating that all they wanted was redress of grievances, all they wanted was the tariff and tax burdens to be removed from the

* The reference is to a class taught by Comrade Green at a Party training school in the State of Illinois during the spring or summer of 1947. The study text used was an *Outline of Marxist-Leninist Fundamentals* issued by the State Educational Commission of the Illinois District of the Party.—Ed.

thirteen colonies so that the thirteen colonies could begin to extend and develop their own industry and their own commerce, but King George rejected it and the colonies had no other recourse but to declare their independence, and they were met by the armed force of King George, by the importation of Hessian troops to the United States, which opened up a period of civil war, and it lasted some seven years, but this was not of the asking of the American colonies; they were even ready to remain as part of the British Empire so long as their basic economic grievances were met, but it was only the refusal of the British ruling class to grant these and then the use of force against them that produced a violent conflict. . . .

For example, in respect to Germany and Italy, where fascism came to power, there the fascists took power in those countries in order to block the masses from bringing about progressive social change and moving in the direction of socialism. And what happened was that the fascists seized power there by violence and maintained that power by violence against the people, while, on the other hand, as far as recent examples go, in Spain, where the people were able to elect a democratic republic in February 1936, in July 1936 they faced an uprising on the part of the fascists, led by Franco and aided by Hitler and Mussolini, which subdued and defeated the Spanish Republic, but the assumption of power there, the change in

governmental power, was peaceful, but the violence came afterwards.

But, in all cases, the violence stems from the forces of reaction, from the vested interests, from the old ruling classes who want to block the path toward further democracy, toward further progress on the part of the people.

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. . . The state under slavery, even in Rome and Athens and ancient history where our history books tell about the democracy that began to flourish there, was nonetheless a state which protected the slave-owners against the slaves, and the democracy of Rome and Athens was built upon slavery, because for hundreds of miles in each direction outside of these centers there was slavery, and the mass of the slaves had no rights. It was the slaveowner that had the right, and that system of ownership was conceived of as sacred and holy and just and noble and right, and the laws were based upon that; that under Feudalism we had the state likewise protecting the private property relations of the feudal nobility and the large landowners, and there, too, the state played a role of ostensibly being an impartial umpire but in actuality of being a representative of the dominant, economic class of that time; that in capitalist society the same is true, that the state plays that role, that property rights come before human rights, and that while it is possible under capitalism for gains to be made, for progressive laws to be established, the fact remains that

all this is within the framework of accepting what is the basic structure of society, namely, the private ownership of the means of production by a handful, the ownership of the mines and the mills and the factories, and in that sense I said every state is a form of dictatorship and that in Marxist-Leninist terms the word "dictatorship" is used scientifically, that because this state is based upon the maintenance of certain class relations in society and the dominance of one class as against another, it is by that token a form of dictatorship because the powers of the state are used to uphold and to maintain those economic relations; that of course there are different forms of the state and there are different forms of the capitalist state, and that was the next point that we went into. . . .

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. . . The working class state, in our opinion, is a state which is far more democratic than the capitalist state but, from the scientific point of view—from the Marxist scientific point of view, I pointed out that we consider every state a form of dictatorship and that, therefore, the working class state, under Socialism, is likewise a form of dictatorship in this sense, that while the state under capitalism is based upon the protection of capitalist private property, that the state under Socialism is based upon the protection of public ownership of the means of production, and that there is no contradiction between the two things; that every state has

elements of dictatorship—that is why it arose and came into being—and this is true of the working class state as of previous states. The only difference—the difference between the working class state and previous states is the following:

That the working class state, when it arises, represents for the first time the real majority of the people against a handful of the old exploiting elements, while all previous states represented the interest of a minority as against the interests of the great majority, and that the repressive features of the working class state are these: that they aim to curb the powers of the old capitalist class in its attempts to bring about a restoration and to return itself once again to the seat of power.

Now, in dealing with this, I likewise gave an example of what is stated here a little later on, "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a new type of democracy. It is 'a state that is democratic in a new way—for the proletarians and the propertyless in general—and dictatorial in a new way—against the bourgeoisie'", and I explained how it is possible for a state to be dictatorial in a new way against a minority group and by that fact be more democratic for the great majority of the people. . . .

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To study the conditions of the American people, their problems, in this study to apply the science of Marxism-Leninism which is based upon the study of the experience of

all past mankind, from this application and study to draw conclusions as to what has to be done to fight for the welfare of the people today, to devise a program in the course of that struggle, to help organize meetings, help bring the truth to the people in terms of what has to be done, to lead struggles in behalf of the people. All this is part of the

methods of advocating Marxism-Leninism and all these things related to teaching the people on the basis of their experience in defense of their everyday interests why, even though they can win partial concessions under capitalism, the logic of this struggle must lead in the direction of a transformation of society and the establishment of socialism....