

## THEORY—THE CURE-ALL?

The Draft Resolution admits that government repression and other objective conditions played a major role in bringing on the present party crisis. In the main, however, the Resolution stresses left sectarian ideological errors as the prime cause for party isolation and impotence. "These left sectarian mistakes," it declares, "are the main reason for the unprecedented degree to which it was possible for big business and its political representatives to isolate the party."

According to Fred Fine, "given a correct line and correct policies . . . we could have blunted and even circumvented some of the sharpest phases of the attacks upon us. What is more, we could have helped the nation as a whole more quickly to move into new pathways towards peaceful coexistence." (*The Worker*, July 1, 1956)

Albert Blumberg, another national leader, in an article entitled *Must Overhaul Theory As Well As Practice* (*The Worker*, July 15, 1956) criticized those "who see the answer to our problems exclusively in a change of methods, leadership, etc. while clinging to past theory and practice." He called for "a reassessment of our whole basic theory" and "a restudy of our own country and the needs of its workingclass and people against the background of new objective conditions."

In view of the changing domestic and international situation, the American Communist Party obviously cannot continue functioning as it has. It will have to modify its tactics and methods of work, Americanize and democratize itself. But does this new approach require a



wholesale rejection of the principles and activities of the preceding period?

Can new theories be developed overnight and without the risk of grave blunders? And have "the realities of the mid-fifties" of which Blumberg speaks, sufficiently crystallized for "reassessing our whole theory"?

Even Lenin did not formulate extensions of Marxist theory until a generation after the new features of monopoly capitalism had come into existence.

The fact that international wars are no longer to be considered inevitable makes necessary reformulations of Leninist principles. This new era, however, is still in its infancy. Like the phenomena of nature, social phenomena must first disclose themselves and be investigated before men can form correct concepts or theories about them. Mao Tse-tung noted in his *On Practice*: "In a feudal society one cannot know beforehand the laws of capitalist society because capitalist society not yet having appeared, there cannot be any practice appropriate to it. Marxism can only be the product of capitalist society. In the age of the capitalism of free competition, Marx could not know concretely beforehand some of the special laws of the age of imperialism because this age, the last stage of capitalism, had not yet arrived and there was no practice appropriate to it."

More critical is the danger of focussing attention exclusively on ideological errors when the real source of party disintegration lies elsewhere.

Blumberg admits that party members show trends of "outright panic and loss of faith in socialism and in the party."

It is important to investigate whether these symptoms and the general weakness of the American Communist

Party are due to ideological errors and can be cured by new theories.

The ideological differences between the right and left wings in the party reflect the cyclic movements and the contradictory aspects of contemporary American capitalism. The inability to master the complexity or the specific features of that development leads to over and underestimation of given events—or ideological errors.

All Marxist parties have experienced such mistakes and deviations.

### SOURCES OF IDEOLOGICAL ERRORS

Errors in theory arise out of onesided perceptions and out of limited experience. The problem of recognizing onesidedness is not always a simple one, particularly when surrounding objective forces *are actually moving in a onesided direction*. It is when these change their direction that onesidedness is perceived, and then often not without some lapse of time. In addition, in periods of rapid social change, when history proceeds by leaps, old contradictions develop new expressions. The struggle between the new