

FORUM

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SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVES IN THE U.S. - Section I

Note: This is the first, but most important section of the resolution on the United States adopted by the PC to be presented to the convention and in the pre-convention discussion. Two smaller sections are yet to come. These will concern the struggle of the Negro people and the decline of McCarthyism. The final section will address itself to the question of socialist unity, the line of which was already communicated in the memorandum. (See last issue of Forum)

We are publishing also a resolution submitted by Comrade Draper as a substitute resolution for the above-mentioned first section.

The Editors
May 23, 1957

Prospects for the socialist movement in the U.S. are linked closely to the fate of socialism throughout the world. Because it has been relatively weak here, socialists and radicals have been especially sensitive to the course of different tendencies in countries where the movement was a mass force. If socialism was without mass influence or only in the first stages of real influence, it was possible to point to Europe where the working class was solidly socialist as a model for future America. And if Stalinism finally triumphed over socialism among radicals in the U.S., it was not due primarily to any peculiar American conditions or events but to the victories of Stalinism internationally.

On a world scale, the socialist movement appears already to have entered a new historic period. Its resurgence is unmistakably illuminated by the appearance of the anti-Stalinist socialist revolutionary movement in the nations under Stalinist tyranny, culminating in the Hungarian Revolution. Here, it was at last revealed, is the mass, popular force capable under favorable conditions of ending totalitarianisms; an event equal in historical significance to the rise of the modern workingclass movement and its early struggles more than a hundred years ago in Europe and sixty years ago in Russia.

The period of setbacks, defeats, disintegration appears to be coming to an end. The resurgence of world socialism is visible. It is not necessarily the moment when a single giant stride forward will quickly change everything at once; but we have reached the dividing line between the end of one epoch and the beginning of another. The collapse of the 2nd International in the first world war; the defeat of revolutionary working class movements in the post-war era; everywhere but in Russia; the crushing of the German workers by Hitler, the Austrians by Dolfuss; the Spanish by Franco; the Italians by Mussolini; the victory of Stalinism over the Russian working class; and finally the second world war followed by the spread of Stalinism which wiped out every independent socialist, democratic and popular right where it triumphed—this was the grim course that led almost everywhere to demoralization and decline of socialism. In the U.S., it was this that facilitated the rise of Stalinism and reduced the democratic socialist movement to a group of small, fragmented sects. It is this period that is at last, coming to an end as Stalinism is struck by revolutionary, democratic socialist risings and is forced into decline as a world movement.

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What does this signify for the socialist movement in the U.S.? We have reached a turning point in events which demands a turn in the outlook of all socialists and all socialist groups. New opportunities arise; it is possible now to rebuild the democratic socialist movement. All groups, tendencies, sects and individuals that turn their attention to this task can make a lasting contribution to American socialism; those that turn their backs upon it, or who stand in the way, risk political obliteration and decline.

In the years of stagnation and defeat, socialist sects had the duty of preserving the ideals and perspective of socialism as widely as possible even when their political role was drastically restricted by an enforced isolation. But new times demand a new outlook. If the rebuilding of socialism now is truly possible, then the era of the socialist sects is coming to an end. In any case, it is their duty now to make the attempt to move forward to a broad movement.

The new possibilities do not arise directly within the United States, out of big events in its domestic politics or out of the native class struggle. But they do arise in the United States. The task could be summed up as follows: 1. to rebuild the democratic socialist movement in the U.S. in the light of the new world situation and, 2. to win a place for it on the American political scene. These twin tasks: to reconstruct the movement and to bring socialism to the American people are of course intimately related; in fact, inseparable. It would be impossible to rebuild the movement unless it could hope for a new hearing before a new audience in the working class. And it would be impossible to win a new hearing unless the adherents of socialism can be reoriented and reassembled into an effective force.

Socialist perspectives in the United States are dominated and determined by the following key facts:

1. The organization of the majority of the industrial working class into unions. The American workers are an organized class.
2. The fight of Negroes for full equality; above all, the struggles for democracy in the South.
3. The decline of McCarthyism.
4. The disintegration of the Communist Party and the collapse of Stalinism in the U.S.
5. The search for a road to Socialist regroupment and reunification.

I. Socialists and the Labor Movement

Socialism can become a genuine working class movement not merely in theory or perspective but in actuality only when it can summon the support of significant sections of the class and act as the vehicle for its political aspirations. It is certainly not that now, nor will it be so for some time to come. The movement at this point is a small and fragmented force. It can be reorganized and reoriented in a reasonably short time and emerge as a movement of political significance. But under the best of circumstances, even after its present strength has been multiplied many times over, it will remain relatively small compared to the movement of the American working class, the trade unions.

The organized working class number 18 million, a cohesive class force of unprecedented power. It is this class to which socialism must look if it is to become a real political force. Yet, this giant class, organized, remains non-socialist, even anti-socialist, tolerating capitalism as a social system.

The paradox will remain: a weak socialism which can become strong only with the support of labor; a powerful labor movement which rejects socialism. Upon this.

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background, any newly emerging socialist movement will have to fashion its tactics and approach. It will determine the relationship of the socialist movement to the labor movement, two forces of vastly different proportions.

The permanent organization of a majority of the industrial working class, an event consummated only ten years ago in the great post-war strike wave, is an historical achievement of exceptional importance. It influences the political development of the nation; it creates the basic preconditions for the rise of socialism and determines its course.

A generation ago, the militant minority of the working class, strongly influenced by radicals and socialists, opened up the way to organization in the mass production industries and now the whole working class has poured through. There have been times when the organized labor movement was more democratic, more militant, more interested in independent political action, more receptive to socialist ideas than today. But the militant organized sector lived and fought surrounded by a vast unorganized, sometimes backward, and always helpless unorganized majority.

The new fact of decisive significance is that these millions, this majority, in the course of decades of struggles in politics and in industry have raised themselves out of amorphous disorganization to conscious organized class power. What has been accomplished cannot be wiped out; it is the base upon which all future development begins. If the militant victory has stagnated, even moved backward, the majority, the whole class has advanced.

The AFL-CIO merger was not the cause of this great advance; it resulted from it and climaxed the period. It represented, too, another step forward. All the gains of the past were preserved; all the rights and potentialities of industrial unionism were enforced. But more. The influence of the most conservative sections of the labor movement was instantly reduced to a minor position; corrupt elements were thrown on the defensive; the opponents of racism were encouraged. For decades progressives had denounced racketeering in the unions and called for a fight against it. But the relationship of forces was such, that the CIO could do little outside of its own ranks and the AFL was paralyzed from within. Unity made it possible to begin what had been impossible in practice before. Above all, unity increases the political power, the self-confidence and class feeling of the workers, factors which, in the long run, enhance the possibilities of socialist consciousness.

In the long run. In the period ahead, however, when the socialist movement has yet to emerge as a genuine mass movement it is essential that it avoid presenting itself as a sect ... that is, to guard against demanding that the real labor movement submit in advance to ideal norms worked out for it lest it meet a withering castigation from socialists. If socialism remained merely a sect, without ties of any kind with the labor movement, if its message found no audience whatsoever within the unions, then its attitude toward the unions could make as little impact for harm as for good. When no one is listening, it hardly matter what is said or how. But once the socialist movement advances to the point where it is no longer simply a sect, even though not yet a mass movement; once it has attained a hearing in the labor movement and some influence in it, its policy and activity must be carefully formulated. By a wise policy it can cultivate and ever-increasing circle of sympathizers. By a rash one, it can squander its first capital.

The trade unions, which are nothing less than the class movement of the American workers, will undoubtedly be staffed and led by officers who accept capitalism and carry on the trade union struggle within that framework; just as the vast

majority of American workers, organized and unorganized, are pro-capitalist in their outlook and will remain so for some time. Socialists confront not a disorganized, amorphous, idealess working class which must first be organized and educated in political elements but an organized, politically conscious (if not yet independent), procapitalist labor movement. There arises, then, the difficult and delicate problem of the relationship between a renewed, but still small minority socialist movement and the big, majority labor movement, non-socialist or pro-capitalist in varying degrees.

The labor movement needs the inspiration of socialist ideals, ideals which have proven their vitality and indestructibility in the working class movement of the world for a century and a half through times of tragic defeat and reaction as well as in times of advance. If the labor movement in the U.S. becomes bureaucratic, as it does, if it becomes mired in self-defeating opportunism, as it does, if it often wastes its own superb potential for human betterment for trivial gains, as it does -- one reason is that it is not inspired from within by the genuinely, democratic liberating goals of socialism.

But we do not expect, and we certainly cannot "demand" that the unions (i.e. the working class movement) accept socialist policies before we recognize that their struggles can advance the cause of labor and democracy. Above all, we do not derogate their achievements because they do not set goals which we propose. Rather we explain that all their advances, all their demands, won or partially won, are not the benevolent dispensation of social engineers, enlightened employers, or self-styled friends of labor, but are the fruits of their own class strength and solidarity, their ability and readiness to fight if necessary. In short, we aim not to disparage the real movement of the workers but to enhance their feeling of class pride and consciousness of power without which any genuine socialist consciousness is impossible.

There are those who see nothing but defeats; successfully perpetrated betrayals; setbacks, impermissible concessions and compromises at every point. They delude themselves that such an attitude somehow demonstrates their own unmatched "revolutionary" zeal and unshaken socialist faith. They are wrong -- but that is not all -- in the spirit of ultra-left sectarianism they would undermine the confidence of the working class, not in its leaders but in itself. They cannot understand that even without their strictures from without, the working class is so powerful that it can move forward despite political shortcomings and lack of socialist consciousness.

We do not anticipate any fundamental change in the character of the present union leadership in the near future. The workers will participate in significant political, social and industrial struggles -- class struggles, in practice -- still captained by a leadership which abjures the class struggle in principles. This leadership, at least its most socially conscious authentic representatives will remain, and the rank and file, who share the same general ideology, will continue to place its confidence in such a leadership which in fact represents them as they are.

Socialists in the labor movement do not seek to control the unions, or to manipulate them for private aims through secret factional maneuvering. This deserves re-statement now because of the justified distrust instilled in the working class through its experiences with Stalinism. Rather they join with all other militants and progressives in the labor movement to support the labor movement against all its enemies, within and without, to defend it from anti-labor attack, to rid it of racketeering and racism in all forms, to promote democracy. Like all union militants, socialists strive for the advance of the honest wing of the labor movement -- the alliance of the progressive section of the AFL and the CIO -- to cut

down the power of ultra-conservatives and above all to end the power of the corruptionists. We strive too for the increased influence of the most socially conscious wing of the labor movement, represented in part by the forces in the CIO that made Reuther's rise possible in the UAW and in the CIO.

Socialist unionists do not aim to graft some special credo of their own upon the labor movement. They are distinguished from other union loyalists and militants essentially in this: in all the struggles and activities of the union and of the workers, they see the long range implications of working class independence and finally the full democracy of socialism.

The interests of labor and of the nation imperatively require the formation of a new political party initiated by the unions, a Labor Party. This is the central issue of domestic politics. The founding of a new party would advance democracy and open up new possibilities for the rise of socialist influence. Wherever a strong working class possesses democratic rights, it organized its own party — except in the U.S. The fact that this perspective is more than a remote abstraction but a realistic possibility here too is indicated at every critical point in the nation's politics. In 1948, to mention only one notable example, the UAW called for a "political realignment" in the U.S. through a formation of a new peoples party, a proposal which could lead in essence only to a Labor Party. Since then the idea has remained on the shelf, inert, but in a somewhat attenuated form it comes up again and again, kept alive and available for use when necessary. Socialists in the unions propose that it be taken off the shelf and made a living proposal in the ranks of organized labor.

While there is now no organized or conscious pro-labor party tendency, organizations which represent a certain measure of independence from the old parties have been founded. They have moved away from mere bourgeois politics but not yet to independent working class politics. Typical are such groups as the P&C, COPE, Liberal Party based upon organized workers; and the ADA among professionals and liberals. Socialists support such movement as a step in the right direction — toward full political independence. Their general ideology, if not the officially stated program, is based upon an acceptance of capitalism or, as they put it, "free enterprise." Yet socialists can find a place inside them as loyal supporters while retaining their own opposition to capitalism and their conviction of the need for a new society. As liberals and laborites, these groups demand full democracy, consistently applied as they understand it. Toward this end they seek to curb the power of nonppoly, to fortify and widen the strength of popular institutions as the base of democracy. They seek, not the rule of the capitalist class, but the rule of the people. Their own aims are vitiated by their pro-capitalism and contradicted by their failure to break with the old parties. Yet it is precisely the same goal of full democracy that we seek more consistently through socialism.

In the context of American politics, such groups represent not barriers to socialist ideas and politics but vehicles for the promulgation of democratic ideals and demands. As such, socialists, in good conscience, are able to participate as members and supports in the common cause of democracy. A revived socialist movement would properly urge its own followers to become active participants in such movements and by its structure and rules make it possible for them to do so.

The labor movement plays an active role as a left-wing in bourgeois politics. It seeks political advantage and progress by supporting bourgeois candidates in one of the two old parties, generally in the Democratic Party. A correct socialist policy rejects the line of supporting bourgeois candidates as disorienting and self-defeating and stresses the alternative of a Labor Party.

However, while the labor movement continues within the old party framework, the political antagonism between it and its bourgeois allies is not overcome or abolished but only slurred over. While socialists do not favor labor's continued alliance with the Democratic Party, they nevertheless urge the labor movement to press further and more aggressively, more militantly for the program and political demands which it has already formulated. From its own standpoint, which we do not necessarily share, the labor movement should fight for its own candidates in the old party primaries rather than confine itself to supporting old line machine men or self-styled liberals; it should insist that the liberal New Dealers whom it supports inside the Democratic Party break with the reactionary Slave Dealers and cease giving aid and comfort to them in the name of party unity. Such a demand was put to them by Reuther in 1956 ("you cannot have Eastland and us at the same time") but it turned out to be a mere bluff. It should not rest content with crumbs tossed to it by the old party hacks but should press aggressively for its own demands in Congress and in the old parties, judging politicians by their readiness to fight for it in Congress -- or their failure to do so. In short, in politics as in all arenas, socialists point to the concentrated numbers and social power of labor suggesting that it demand democratic recognition of that power.

Labor is engaged in political struggle -- not always for what socialists would propose, not in the manner they suggest -- but in its own way. Never was the discrepancy between the power of labor and the weakness of organized socialism so great. In the days of its most impressive electoral triumphs, the old SP could win a million votes at a time when the unions numbered perhaps only twice that number. And within the unions, socialism was a strong and respected current. That relationship of forces is gone, probably never to return in exactly that form. Now organized labor enrolls 18,000,000 and organized socialism is fragmented. Even under the most favorable conditions, a reunited, revived, American socialist movement will remain a relatively minor force compared to the giant organizations of the working class. It will require new big class struggles, new political experiences before socialism can expect to influence and lead even a substantial wing inside the labor movement.

Socialism must come forward clearly as part of the labor movement and not as a rival to it. It seeks always to stimulate the working class and its organizations toward greater social independence. At the same time it is careful even when it disagrees not to appear as an obstacle to them or to their effort to win what they can through methods and institutions which they favor.

There is, of course, no genuine workers party today -- a workers party in the sense that it enrolls significant sections of the working people who look to it for leadership in political action. Socialist participation in election campaigns through their own candidates at this stage could at best serve only for minor propaganda and not for real participation in political events. It could interest at best only thousands while the labor movement leads millions and engages their active loyalty and support.

When the ISL was founded as a propaganda league out of the Workers Party, it recognized that our tendency was not a party then and could not hold out the realistic prospect of becoming one. Election campaigns were abandoned and never revived. The same factors that motivated our decision then will undoubtedly hold true for a revived socialist movement tomorrow. Except under unusual circumstances which cannot be foreseen at this time, it would be a mistake for socialists to enter their own candidates in the elections. It is not simply a question of time, money or energy in a technical sense but a question of the relationship between a politically active, organized working class and a small organized socialist movement.

When the labor movement supports bourgeois candidates, despite the urgings of socialists, it campaigns among its membership for support in the elections. The more active, the more militant, the more union-conscious members, precisely those most likely to be interested in socialism and to look with sympathy upon it, are the first to follow the union's leadership in this respect. They do so not because they are eager to support capitalism or capitalist candidates but because they support their union out of feelings of class solidarity.

This places a difficult, even delicate, task before socialists: how to present the idea of political independence at a time when labor is engaged in political campaigns in alliance with bourgeois elements. Socialists have the obligation in their press and at their public meetings before, during and after elections to explain in a patient manner and in the most friendly terms that so long as labor continues to support bourgeois candidates it will nullify its own power and find it impossible to win its most important political demands. But at the same time, socialists must not place themselves in the position of campaigning among workers to reject the advice of their unions in the midst of a political campaign or to call upon them not to vote for or to vote against the candidates endorsed by the unions -- even though they are bourgeois candidates whom we oppose.

If the union, for example, says: Vote for Mr. Democrat. Socialists should not reply by saying, "Do not vote for Mr. Democrat." Rather we point out in an educational manner that the policy of supporting those like him leads up a blind alley.

This may seem like a fine distinction. Yet the difference in attitude which underlies it is quinessential even critical. Socialists exercise their democratic right of political discussion without giving anyone a chance of accusing them falsely of sabotaging the political effort of the labor movement. If socialist candidates, at this stage, were entered against the candidates endorsed by the unions, it would be virtually impossible to conduct socialist propaganda and education in the necessary spirit.

We do not, as a rule, favor that socialists run candidates in opposition to those endorsed by the labor movement even when it endorses bourgeois candidates. To repeat, we oppose the policy of supporting bourgeois candidates; if we do not favor running socialist candidates it is not to facilitate support to bourgeois candidates but solely to ensure that the small socialist movement does not pit itself against the class movement of labor. Any minor propaganda advantage offered by running candidates would be more than cancelled out by the antagonisms and difficulties created among labor militants loyal to the union and to its official policy.

The ISL then does not propose to run its own candidates in the elections. Except in the most unusual circumstances which cannot be foreseen, it does not propose that any other socialist groups or combination of groups present a socialist ticket in the elections. Nor is it likely that it would be advisable, for reasons stated above, for a reunited socialist movement to present its own candidates at an early stage in its development.

The position adopted here does not proceed from any general considerations of what the proper relationship should be between the socialist movement and the trade unions, but rather from the concrete circumstances which prevail today and which we expect will prevail in the immediate future.

One important factor which indicates this tactic at the present time is that the official political position of the labor movement represents the views not only of

its overwhelming mass, but even of its most militant and progressive section, short of the tiny number of trade unionists with socialist convictions and affiliations.

There is no iron necessity which dictates that this will remain the case indefinitely, or even that future developments can only follow a pattern in which the labor leadership itself initiates political moves aimed at breaking up labor's pretend support of the Democratic Party. If and when strong progressive currents of dissatisfaction and revolt against the present policy arise within the labor movement, socialists will naturally find their place in such currents. It is not at all excluded that one way in which socialists may seek to give support and even leadership to such currents may be by running candidates in elections, when such action is opposed by the dominant, official policy of the trade unions. Such a policy might be indicated on a local scale even in the immediate future.

The key consideration is not simply that socialists should not counterpose themselves to the official policy of the labor movement. What is important is that socialist electoral activity be based on considerations arising out of real trends in the working class, and not merely for the purpose of socialist propaganda, regardless of such trends or the absence of them.

However, despite our own views, other groups may propose to run socialist candidates. From the standpoint of the long range question of the relationship between the socialist and labor movements in the U.S., it may be unwise, as we see it, to take such a step. But this is a period of discussion of socialist regroupment in which the shape and nature of a reunified socialist movement may be determined in a comparatively short time. Under such conditions, the attitude of the ISL toward socialist candidates in the elections will be determined not by the objective of making general socialist propaganda, or even propaganda for independent labor politics, but by the more immediate aim of furthering the most effective and desirable socialist regroupment.

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Substitution for Section I of PC Resolution on Socialist
Perspectives in the United States

by Comrade Draper

The ISL, which does not look on itself as a party, does not propose to run candidates in elections--as before.

We reject, however, the conception that a socialist party should refrain from opposing capitalist candidates because the latter are supported by a majority of the organized working class. The duty of a socialist party is to be a vanguard of the class, not its tail. By running its own candidates if and where such campaigns are organizationally practicable and bid fair to be politically fruitful, a socialist party can bring its message to the workers, including the message of independent political action, and offer a progressive alternative to those more conscious workers who already understand the anti-labor nature of the old parties. This is not to be derogated as "propaganda" versus "real participation in politics!" but is itself one basic mode, among others, of socialist participation in politics.

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ON THE CONTROVERSY IN THE ISL
by Debbie Meier

I:

Both PC majority and minority are agreed upon quite a bit when you think about it. They are agreed that the unity of all democratic socialist tendencies in the framework of the SP could be an excellent step forward. They are agreed as to what groups they hope to reunite in this manner. More than that they are agreed on certain basic definitions of a healthy unity. They all agree it means that the majority should not have to submit itself undemocratically to the minority, that the minority should have full democratic rights to put forth its position both publicly and privately, and they are agreed that a healthy unity means one in which all tendencies view the party as the main center for their attention (not their own little tendencies) and in which all view each other as comrades not enemies engaged in a knock-down struggle for power. Above all everyone seems agreed that a healthy unity means one which does not raise the specter of splits and expulsions at every convention and over every disagreement.

II:

Then what is the controversy between Haskell-Draper and the rest of the PC? In actual fact if one reads their two resolutions this is probably a mystery; and even reading the articles by Haskell and Draper is puzzling because while one gathers from the article by Haskell and in particular from the one by Draper that the differences are sharp, deep and serious, it still remains unclear what they are attacking. Certainly it is nothing in the PC majority resolution on unity -- and therein lies the problem. For in actual fact, in my opinion, the Haskell-Draper amendment or substitution does not substantially change the PC resolution, and especially not on the basis of the watered-down interpretation of it which Haskell gives.

I would suggest that what Haskell and Draper are aiming their attack at is a line of reasoning and a type of approach which can only be demonstrated by conversations with members of the PC majority (especially since they have not replied to either Haskell or Draper, and may well never do so). Thus the comments that I am about to make are based on my own such conversations, debates, inquiries, etc.

What Haskell is concerned about is the feeling that the PC majority would like to achieve unity at any cost and without consideration of whether this or that means of achieving it can or cannot accomplish the purposes we have in mind, i.e. a healthy unity. The PC wants unity consummated as fast and as simply as possible. They feel convinced first of all that only a relatively rapid unity can take advantage of the special situation we are now in, and secondly that many of the problems envisaged by Haskell, et al will be considerably lessened by the actual process of unity and of living and functioning together in one organization.

What are Haskell's fears? We have not, he says, really considered the kinds of problems that would arise in a united organization. If the SP leadership made no fundamental changes in its own attitudes, if they simply agreed to unity on the spur of the moment under ill-considered pressures, we would constantly (at least in the immediate, early and decisive period right after unification) be faced with this right wing leadership, which we could not and would not want to drive out of the organization, which took fright at any militant activity, any controversial actions, and any expression of our politics. Such a situation would be impossible. We could of course avoid getting involved in any militant activity, controversial actions, etc. However to begin with, especially insofar as we were a majority (a

likely possibility if one takes us and the present left wing of the SP) such a course would be political suicide for our members, especially our youthful ones. But more important such a path could not build a strong SP, could not serve to attract these various elements from the affiliated and unaffiliated left. The SP can only become the focal point of American radicalism by being so in reality, by placing itself into controversy, into alive and active situations. That is the task we can help perform for it, and that is a perspective the SP must be won to.

The majority is afraid that if the SP should consider all these questions they will never agree to unity, or at least it will hold them off for too long and our opportunity will have been lost or passed us all by. And say they, lots of the SP's prejudices will be altered when they begin to work with us, see what we can do, find out we're not men from outer space with horns, etc. But the problem with this approach is that, assuming all this is true, assuming the SP has misconceptions about us and that we can quickly alter these in the early days of unity. Nevertheless part of the problem lies not in a misunderstanding between us and the SP right wing, but an understanding. That is, the present SP right wing is, from our viewpoint not only politically wrong on this or that theoretical question, but more serious they have a fundamentally sectarian and worse, an inactivity-oriented approach. They are deathly afraid of growth in one sense, for they are afraid of becoming a controversial organization which is the very essence of becoming influential and becoming a center of the American left. They will fight tooth and nail, at present, to maintain their "reputation," which means unfortunately to them, their innocuousness.

If the PC majority approach, the soothe-the-SP-and-achieve-unity approach, could really work I would oppose it vigorously. It is alluring. But it is based, in my opinion, on a blindness to reality. For if it would work it would either mean our political death within a dead SP, or it would mean a constant bickering and factional fighting to liven the SP.

But I would suggest, off hand, that at present it is clear that the Haskell fears are unfounded, not because the PC majority might not have given cause for them, but because for one thing the very existence of a PC minority concerned over them makes their course of action impossible, and for another the SP right wing seems to be far more cautious and more sensible in this respect than the PC might have hoped.

The SP is going to ask the questions--they are going to want to know what will happen at conventions, and more important what will happen when this or that issue is raised, what will happen in Chicago, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Pittsburgh, here or there. And the SP which is afraid of being on the same platform with the CP because the NY Times will blast it, an SP afraid to be on the same platform with Max Shachtman, etc., this type of an SP will be scared also at the publicity the very act of unity would achieve.

Therefore we can rest assured of one thing--when the SP takes up our offer and our challenge, it will constitute a qualitative change on their part, a realization of the necessary ingredients for growth and a willingness to take a few risks themselves in order to benefit their own politics and political perspectives. For insofar as they are really serious about, not only socialism but even their own socialist tendency then we can convince them, because unity, unity with all its faults and difficulties, will be as good if not better for their socialist ideas as it is for ours. But we must in the end count upon the seriousness of their own politics and their own concern for the socialist movement. It is that real concern which will achieve unity and which will make them tolerant partners in a successful and healthy unity.

It is our task not to get them to close their eyes to any of the problems, but to open their eyes to all of the possibilities which make it worthwhile to make petty and minor sacrifices. The proposition we have put forward after all is the result of both serious thinking and serious qualitative changes in our own approach to the socialist movement and to basic socialist problems. We cannot expect them to accept this proposition without a similar process of serious thinking and some serious qualitative changes in their own approach to some questions.

I think therefore that with slight amendments the present PC resolution suits fine our purposes, and suits fine the purposes of Haskell for that matter. It clearly states our aims in such a unity and it clearly states our one qualification--a truly democratic organization. What is at stake then is not the resolution, but an "attitude" which the PC has not expressed in their resolution. But insofar as we of the ISL membership ask questions, we in effect prevent the growth of that "attitude," or of its effectiveness. And certainly, incidentally, for good or ill, the YSL discussion forced a full and exhaustive (especially the latter) discussion of the details of our perspective which every SP right winger will undoubtedly consider before he makes his final decision.

III:

The real danger with the PC majority approach is not that it will "fool" the SP into entering unity without a detailed consideration of its problems. The problem is that it has gone hand in hand with another "attitude," a defeatist attitude toward the ISL entity itself. Unity may not be achieved. The SP may let this opportunity pass it by, thereby ending its political existence for good. What then? The ISL approach at present has given rise to a feeling that such a pass would be impossible, too terribly to contemplate, oh no, and etc. The truth is that while as compared to a real reunification of the American left it would be dismal, compared to the difficult and dismal years we have just come through such a future can be prosperous. For if we take advantage of the boldness and creativeness of our unity proposal, if we take advantage of this period for some real fresh thinking, and if we make full use of our talents and resources, we can come out of this regroupment period in comparatively excellent shape--for the political experiences of the last few years should be of real aid to our growth, not to our demise, as a tendency either within a new framework or within the old one.

But this means that while we put our emphasis on unity and do everything in our power to consummate such a unity, we should not ignore the possibilities of at the same time laying the foundations for our own growth. And for both these purposes the Haskell-Draper press proposals are important and excellent. A PC capable of thinking creatively and boldly about unity shows amazing sectarianism, sentimentality and orthodoxy when they think about LA and NI. We need a good, attractive and realistic press--in other words a less frequent magazine. We also need better organizational correspondence and communications, more tours and occasional pamphlets. These needs must be considered seriously, and if it means giving up a weekly or bi-weekly press, I think it is worth it, especially if it means giving up a newspaper format which is not much better than useless.

Another step we have embarked upon and which I hope is not merely symptomatic of our unity proposition--is the task of reexamining old "orthodoxies" and shibboleths which in terms of their daily application we have long ago given up but which in terms of generalities, first principles and the like we have held on to for dear life. In today's period such a task can serve us in good stead "recruitment-wise" as well as in terms of developing a correct political approach.

And the Benson pamphlet, which was a very impressive job in so many respects, was also an indication of our ability to write a political and in a sense agitational

pamphlet without sectarian language and with a suitable tone for its readers. Let's use that nonsectarian tone and approach in dealing with other, far less horrendous and obnoxious political groupings—for example, groups such as Dissent.

If unity turns out to be impossible we will have nevertheless opened up for ourselves new arenas (including some within the SP) for achieving a very much smaller and less impressive "regroupment" on the basis of third camp politics. If we remain lively, controversial and attractive in our approach to other radicals, we need not shudder at the thought that our unity perspective will fail. We shall all be the losers if it fails—but us least and the SP most, that is both the sad and happy truth about our proposition.

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THE VANGUARD PARTY

By Saul Berg and Debbie Meier

The following article, written for FORUM, appeared originally in the Young Socialist Review since it was particularly pertinent to some of the discussion being raised there by the YSL's Left Wing Caucus. However as a glance at the YSL discussion indicates certain very old, fundamental, "theoretical" questions have been raised in that discussion, questions which the ISL has over the years gradually and only half-consciously altered its views on. The question of the role of the vanguard party is one of these questions. Unfortunately, while the League's views have undoubtedly changed its members and in particular its leading committee have failed to take cognizance of these changes, thus causing a certain schizophrenia--its current politics and its past politics are both defended as though no real changes have marked the road. Such schizophrenia does more than confuse the "young," it also we fear confuses ourselves, our sympathizers, our leadership and thus our own development.

* * * * *

It would be presumptuous for us to state that in this article we are presenting the views of the League. We have adopted in the past resolutions on the social democracy, resolutions on our Labor Party perspectives and on developments in the British Labor Party which, in our opinion, stem from the sort of attitude we express here. These resolutions and related discussions did not pretend to deal broadly with the whole concept of a vanguard. Nevertheless our guess is that what we are going to say is in general in accord with the current views of most of our members. Even most of those whose first reaction will be to disagree should stop to examine whether they are merely hanging on to traditional baggage that is in conflict with their own attitude toward present-day problems.

EARLY WP-SWP DIFFERENCES ON VANGUARD

Without a doubt the position of revolutionary socialists with regard to the vanguard party has undergone changes in the past 10-20 years. At the time of the formation of the WP certain indications of these changes showed themselves. One difference, crucial in the early WP-SWP relations, was with regard to internal democracy within the party and the relationship between the party and the public. The WP developed a position, quite different than the "orthodox Trotskyist" one, that it was a perversion of Leninism, or in other words of sound socialist practice, to exclude the public and therefore the working class also, from party discussions by holding them behind closed doors and presenting only the conclusions--the majority opinion and its analyses--openly. The WP held that since the task of a revolutionary vanguard was also to educate the working class, this meant that all the activities of the party should, if possible, be carried on where all could see and hear. That meant that members should have the right to defend their positions publicly prior to the "final" decision, and also to continue to argue publicly for their defeated position in order to attempt to change the party's position and to educate the working class in the process. In terms of action, the WP held, of course, that this did not affect the responsibility and obligation of all members, minority and majority, to implement the majority's decisions and to differentiate oneself from the organization when one felt it necessary to put forth the minority's viewpoint.

To the SWP this was considered heresy--a breach of the basic conceptions of a vanguard. Such a vanguard, they held, could not lead the workers if it came before them in a divided intellectual and theoretical state, if all its members did not act and talk like a single unit, always putting forth the correct position as determined by the party as a whole in its internal, private discussions. A vanguard must thru its press, its meetings and its individual members act at all times as a single body, functioning under the tightest discipline and most single-minded direction. It was only in this manner that they could hope to lead the workers and, with their small numbers combat the capitalists too, they argued.

The differences between us and the SWP are even greater today however. For from this early break with traditional orthodoxy, the WP moved, gradually and not always with such conscious clarity, to break with other orthodoxies.

THE NEED FOR REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

In approaching the subject of a vanguard party, let us be clear that we are not denying that the working class, in order to take power, needs to be under the leadership of revolutionary socialists. As our views have altered we have never ignored the need for a party with a revolutionary program. There has to be made at some point a connection between the simplest strivings of the mass of the people and a conscious struggle for a fundamental change in the social order. "Conscious" obviously implies that the class has come under the leadership of people whose strategic aim is workers power, and workers power for the sake of achieving the abolition of exploitation.

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION AS AN EXAMPLE

We are not arguing, in other words, for spontaneity. Amazing upheavals have taken place, it is true, that were unforeseen by the very elements that found themselves in the forefront of them. The Hungarian revolution was an example of this. It didn't spring from nowhere, but it came from what was intended merely as a protest open air rally. Nevertheless, if the Hungarian revolution had been able to develop free from Russian intervention, the successful consolidation of workers' power on a socialist basis would have depended on the conscious aims of a leadership whose socialist education came from two main sources: (1) among the student youth, the intellectuals and the CP rank and file from their practical lessons in the contradictions between life under the bureaucratic dictatorship and its stated aims and propaganda, (2) among a big section of the working class from its traditional attachment to the aims and methods of democratic socialism, reinforced and concretized by its experience of life under Stalinism. In short, if the Hungarian revolution was socialist in outlook this was the result not only of material factors but also of a lengthy educational process, which brought to the fore conscious democratic socialists who had evolved to their present state of consciousness from different backgrounds as the result of their experiences.

If Russian intervention had not taken place, political differentiation might have taken place in the workers councils and other organs of revolutionary power and the most advanced socialist elements in these councils would probably have organized nationally to further their aims. Such a revolutionary leadership could be called a vanguard, but it would have absolutely nothing in common with the idea that we held in the 1930's and through most of the 1940's as to the building of a vanguard party.

THE CONCEPT OF A VANGUARD

These ideas revolved around the basic concept that the revolutionary Marxists (self-styled, of course!) should at all times function as a disciplined body guiding the masses and utilizing their experiences to educate them away from their reformist and Stalinist betrayers. Whether this involved a formally independent party could vary according to circumstances, but even when inside a reformist or centrist party, the revolutionary Marxists would have their own binding discipline.

We should state at once that we are not against discipline; that is the bowing of a minority to a majority in order to be united in action. Simple examples of discipline that all socialists should consider necessary can be given. The execution of a strike by all the union members, once decided by their majority, is the

most obvious example. The necessity for unity of the vote of a Socialist parliamentary group and subjection of the parliamentary group to the will of the membership expressed in party conventions, should be easily seen.

These examples, however, are all examples of the use of discipline to unite the working class or its party against its class enemies. The idea of a disciplined vanguard operating as such over a rather lengthy period of time can only be justified if a clear line can be drawn between this vanguard and other political parties and tendencies in the working class; that is, if you can say, the members of the vanguard are trained, educated, experienced, qualified, scientific socialists—other tendencies are not; the members of the vanguard base themselves on the interests of the working class and are not transmission belts for alien class interests and ideologies—the other tendencies are all corrupted by these hostile class pressures to one extent or another.

THE BOLSHEVIKS AS A VANGUARD

Has such a situation ever existed and can it ever exist? The most common example given is, of course, the Bolshevik Party. The Bolshevik Party is, however, in most respects, a poor example to learn from for various reasons. To begin with its origins are altogether different from those of the Trotskyist sects or the presently existing American sects. At their very formation they represented a major tendency in intellectual and working class life. Outside of the Russian Social Democratic Party there was no other mass institution of working class allegiance. At the time of the Bolshevik-Menshevik split there were simply created two, instead of one, small, but equally influential tendencies which continued to compete, relatively equally, until the time of the Revolutions of 1917. Together they constituted, along with the SRs, the intellectual, and also the socialist and radical leadership of Russia. In other words, they were a real vanguard, acknowledged as such not by themselves but by their role and relationship to other forces in Russian society.

Besides this important distinction, and leaving aside also the interesting and not so easily answered question of just how closely even the Bolshevik Party comes to satisfying the requirements of a vanguard party (trained, scientific, consistent and steadfast in its devotion to the working class and its understanding of its needs in contrast to all other tendencies), we must immediately suspect an experience that has never been repeated in the 40 years of subsequent history.

THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF THE '20s AS VANGUARDS

The Bolshevik Revolution and the years of mass butchery in the trenches of World War I had between them produced a mass Communist movement. This movement then degenerated as the regime in Russia degenerated. Our explanation for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution we still base fundamentally on the exhaustion of the Russian proletariat faced with the years of World War I, the civil war, the famine, the failure of the revolution to spread to more advanced industrial countries. No working class could fight off for many years in a primitive country the emergence of privileged strata under these circumstances.

But does this adequately explain the ease with which the rest of the Comintern went Stalinist? We know that the prestige of the Russian Communist leaders was naturally tremendous and the tendency to accept their ideological authority therefore strong. But, after all, the Russians didn't hold state power in France, Germany, Czechoslovakia and all the other countries with important Communist Parties. If their victory and the Stalinization of these parties could take place so easily

what does this tell us about the pretensions of these mass Communist parties of the 1920's to being the Marxist vanguard? We are not denying that these parties before they were Stalinized, did actually represent the left wing of the European workers' movement, but this left wing was fundamentally as heterogeneous and confused ("unscientific" if you will) as it had been before the Russian Revolution. Where before the war, the left of the labor movement varied in strength from country to country, in some cases mainly anarchist or syndicalist, in others Marxist but with a tremendous variety of views on such subjects as parliamentarianism, spontaneity, economic analysis of capitalism and many other questions, now, after the war, the bulk of all these tendencies were captured for Leninism and Lenin's views by the overwhelming impact of the victorious October Revolution.

What was fundamental to all these tendencies was that they were genuinely devoted to revolutionary proletarian interests, unlike the Social-Democratic leadership that had been the product of a gradual adaptation to the status quo of a comfortable parliamentary and trade union existence. But after the Russian Revolution all these tendencies adopted, superficially, all the political and organizational notions of the Bolshevik party without really understanding or sympathizing with them. Far from setting up a vanguard party, the devoted revolutionists of all varieties who built the Third International threw away the ideas and traditions that had been developed over many years in their own participation in the class struggle and became mechanical followers of what was supposed to be Leninism having become Leninists out of a study of their own experiences; they became easy marks later in the 1920's for whatever the Russian leadership of the Comintern told them.

In a way the famous 21 points required of any party wishing to join the Comintern show most conclusively how artificial was their programmatic unity. By making affiliation conditional upon acceptance of every single point, the Comintern was not actually keeping out reformists and centrists, but just those principled enough not to conceal their position! In France people like Cachin and Frossard, with a record of shameless opportunism, unblushingly accepted all 21 points. Were they demonstrating their revolutionary Marxist convictions, or their willingness to serve the Comintern if allowed to lead the French party?

If we will but recognize that valuable as Marxist theory is, most of it (certainly in its application) is still in the realm of theory in a field--the field of social science--that has not come any here near the point where it can really be called a science, in the sense of a science with exact, verifiable laws, then we should favor, as far healthier for the labor movement than anything that has existed since, the kind of "revolutionary pluralism" (plural tendencies, not plural parties) that existed throughout the European labor movement before World War I, in which the interplay of various types of left wing tendencies made it impossible really to think in terms of a disciplined vanguard.

The VANGUARD VS. "REVOLUTIONARY PLURALISM" IN THE 1920'S

This does not mean that, looking back at the crisis in the social democracy brought to a head by World War I, we are opposed to the splitting of the pro-war reformist parties and the establishment of revolutionary parties. As disgust with the war and enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution grew, confinement of mass revolutionary tendencies within the structure of parties whose leaders sat in the War Cabinets of the imperialist powers would have been absurd. The workers movement could not go back to the status quo of pre-1914. But on the other hand the free development of revolutionary parties after the war was distorted by the pressure for artificial acceptance of a centralized, disciplined international with a finished program.

THE TROTSKYISTS AS A VANGUARD

In the 1930's, the Trotskyists, starting by considering themselves merely an expelled opposition tendency seeking readmission to and reform of the Comintern, within a few years set up the 4th International, on paper a disciplined world body (after a brief stay in the Social Democratic Parties to pick up some left-wingers.) It must be remembered that what the Trotskyist movement tried to do in the '30s was tried in an unprecedented situation. The Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern meant that the mass revolutionary wing of the socialist movement had been destroyed at the very time when world capitalism was in the throes of its deepest crisis. The Trotskyist concept was that, small as their cadres were, if they held up the banner of Marxism, tirelessly exposed the betrayals of the reformists and Stalinists in their daily application, and predicted the results of class collaboration and Stalinist zig-zags, when the illusions of the masses had been dispelled by experience they would come to the Fourth International.

Although their hopes were proven false, these revolutionary optimists of the '30s did have as justification, as mentioned above, the fact that they were confronted by an unprecedented situation. But for us today, there is a wealth of experience available and no excuse for making the same mistakes. Since 1929 we have witnessed a steady succession of social conditions. The traditional workers parties in Western Europe were almost wiped out by a series of events: 1) capitulation to fascism by the movement in Germany, 2) defeat in civil wars in Austria and Spain, 3) disillusionment because of the failure of the Peoples Front in France, 4) the Hitler-Stalin Pact, 5) the conquest of most of Europe by the Nazis. Yet, when Europe emerged from World War II, was there any significant independent revolutionary international? No - everywhere the masses were swept into the ranks of the Social Democracy and the Stalinist parties. Despite the essentially correct predictions of the parties of the Fourth International (at least in comparison to any other organized tendency) during the 1930's, despite their discipline and unity, and despite the abysmal betrayals and failures of the social democrats and Stalinists, the Trotskyist parties picked up at most scores. They never established themselves as a major tendency in the working class. Thus was demonstrated for all but the blind to see the stubborn, conservative attachment of the workers to the traditional organizations, despite all their disillusioning experiences.

In describing these experiences we have referred to the "failure of the Peoples Front," the "disillusionment with social democracy," etc. Why not as well speak of the failure of the small revolutionary parties? Class collaboration propping up a rotten system, demoralized the workers movement. But, even if on a different scale, didn't the failure of the efforts of these opponents of the Peoples Front organized in the Fourth International also serve as a disillusioning experience to most of the limited number of people that participated in them? Perhaps the most damning refutations of any claim of the Trotskyist movement to have been the Marxist vanguard are two simple facts: (1) that never did a movement suffer from more splits, break offs, expulsions and defections of tendencies, and (2) there were more leaders of this movement who left it and embraced other ideas than was the case with any other tendency. You could examine the Trotskyist movement from 1930 to 1939, especially in Spain, France, Germany, Greece, Great Britain and the Netherlands and find overwhelming confirmation of this. We understand that the leadership of a sect is under tremendous pressure to conform, to go over to ideas and organizations that are more respectable and more powerful. But if the bulk of the leadership, one at a time, drifts away in this manner, can their sect realistically think of itself as fulfilling the role of a vanguard? And certainly it must recognize the demoralizing impact that has upon others who might be considering viewing it as a vanguard.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE TYPE PARTY

The conclusions we draw are simple enough. We favor the broadest interplay of ideas within the socialist movement. We favor participation in mass socialist parties not just for the purpose of a slow raid instead of a quick one, but until and unless masses of socialists demand a separation as an ineluctable reflection of directly counterposed positions held by reformists and revolutionaries in a period of social crisis. We favor functioning as an integral part of such parties, not "working in" them. We tend to discourage the idea of a well-organized revolutionary faction within broad socialist parties during "peaceful" times. In certain circumstances, e.g. when confronted by a bureaucratic leadership and the need for revolutionary action, a well-organized and disciplined left wing position might be required—but this is not at all the same thing as the traditional vanguard which develops itself and its cadres as an entity in order to leap into the breach in the future and distant crisis.

In Great Britain today, for example, the party of the Fourth International functions "within" the Labor Party, organized as a disciplined vanguard and cadre organization with its own decision-making bodies, etc. In other words, they are a separate entity engaged in a separate task—the building of a revolutionary vanguard party out of elements of the present Labor Party. Such an organization assumes a crystallization of firmly-held views on a variety of problems. Ones views should be presented and defended, of course, but for the purpose of an exchange of views and for the purpose of constant effort at clarification as further experience unfolds, not as a campaign to win everyone else over to the only scientific Marxist view. For example, we would identify our views with those within the British Labor Party who consider themselves revolutionary socialists, third campers, etc., who function as part of the vague "Beyan tendency," publishing their own magazine, pressing their own views and trying to build a more consistent left wing with a sound program which can attempt to contest for leadership of the Labor Party on this basis, but which makes no boasts to representing the vanguard of the future socialist revolution, and which imposes no tendency discipline.

THE POSITION OF REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS

We repeat—the old concept of a vanguard, based on our conception of Bolshevik organizational theory—has proven inadequate. As socialists who recognize the advantage of not being weighted down by a conservative, sentimental attachment to traditional orthodoxies, it is time we recognize not only the truth of this in terms of current application, but in terms of its broader implications. We are not merely suggesting that in the U.S.—1957—in our primitive organizational state—the concept is irrelevant; rather we are suggesting that as a basic, generally applicable concept it is and was invalid. While recognizing the fallacy of this theory, it is not necessary to ignore the importance of organization, of discipline (correctly applied) and the possible need in crucial moments for a more tightly organized left wing to combat a bureaucratic right wing leadership, and of course, to combat the direct class enemy.

We are today a long way from facing either of these problems. Today our task is to build a force capable of aiding the working class in its necessary transformation from bourgeois to working class politics. In performing this task we continue to put forth our revolutionary politics, not only because of course we believe they are correct (!), but because it is precisely in this way that we can put ourselves in the best position to work for that vital change—from reformist to revolutionary politics. And also because our revolutionary politics help us to interpret the needs and demands of the workers today and to understand how to intervene and function in their present struggles.

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INTERNATIONAL RESOLUTIONS - part I

The general line of the following on one of the international resolutions was adopted by the Political Committee, with a proviso that amendments may be submitted to it by any member of the committee prior to the convening of the national plenum on the eve of the convention. This is being sent out immediately to permit some preliminary discussion before the convention. This resolution was adopted by a vote of 5-0, one was absent and one PC member not voting.

THE REVOLUTION AGAINST STALINISM

(1) In the three and a half years from March 1953 to October 1956, it has become clear that we have entered a new era of revolution in world politics, marked by the revolution against world Stalinism. The preceding period -- the post-war period from 1945 on -- had been a period marked by the development of and great victories by, the colonial revolution against capitalist imperialism; and this still continues, though less stormily. To it now is added the new era of the anti-stalinist revolution.

The events of 1953-56 which have brought this development to maturity came in two main waves, 1953 and 1956. The precipitant was the death of Stalin in February 1953, with the immediate result of the obvious "panic and disarray" in the ranks of the Kremlin leadership; one of the early unprecedented consequences was the outbreak of strike actions and resistance movements in some Russian concentration camps, such as Norilsk in May; followed by the first open mass-demonstration movement and general strike in any of the satellite states, namely, in Czechoslovakia beginning June 1, and then the world-historic workers' uprising beginning June 17 in East Berlin and East Germany; while soon after, back in the Russian heartland of Stalinism, the fall and execution of Beria on June 26 manifested the existence of continuing strike inside the Kremlin camp itself; then in July the great explosion of rebellion took place in Vorkuta.

An interim space of less sensational or less public events was marked by the fall of Malenkov from first place and his replacement by Khrushchev likewise betokening internal regime strife. The second wave was publicly precipitated by the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party and the Khrushchev speech on the crimes of Stalin, in February 1956. In terms of dissident mass action, this was immediately followed by the demonstrations in Georgia which, whatever their political character, represented a crack in the totalitarian structure; but the crisis reached its heights, as a consequence of the "de-Stalinization" process that had started both from above and below, with the revolutionary upheaval in Poland in October and the immediately following Hungarian Revolution which indeed succeeded in installing a provisional revolutionary regime for four days, before the brutal intervention by Russian troops to crush this revolution. In turn, however, this Russian intervention to massacre the Hungarian Revolution has raised the internal crisis of world Stalinism to new heights, both in the states where it holds state power and in the Communist Parties outside of these states.

(2) The turning point that is marked by these 3½ years is to be seen in the decisive contrast between the position of world Stalinism today and right after the war, a little over 10 years ago.

Then: Russia emerged from the war, despite physical devastation, not only as a military victor but with a new empire, in East Europe; not long after, this Russian empire was further strengthened by the addition of China to the Stalinist

world, as an ally. Record mass Communist Parties grew in France and Italy. While all of Western imperialism was under the hammer of the colonial revolution, in a steady disintegration of its power and influence everywhere in the world, and while one country after another was tearing itself away from colonial domination by Western capital, Stalinist power on a world scale seemed to be on a steady and powerful upward swing, probing with new might into most corners of the world. Its line of progress seemed to be onward and upward inexorably, while, with capitalism doomed as a world system, the world's revolutionary and working-class forces seemed to be hypnotized by its world-historic pretensions and genuine socialism seemed to be as impotent to stop it as was capitalism. It was in this period that there came the greatest burgeoning of despair and defeatism about the future of socialism and indeed of democracy, and the most outspoken growth of both a "wave of the future" illusion in the might and stability of the Stalinist power, and a "1984"-type denigration of the potentialities and powers of the proletariat under totalitarianism.

The anti-Stalinist revolution has come to put an end to this period of triumphant Stalinist expansion and of the illusions and despair that it engendered.

(3) Even before the death of Stalin, the Stalinist world was rocked from within by its first massive and portentous blow, the break between Tito and Russia in 1948, which first showed the explosive power of national-Stalinism within the framework of the Stalinist system itself, this after only three years of the new Russian empire. The dynamite in this outburst came almost purely from national-Stalinism on the bureaucratic level, that is, from the ruling-class antagonisms between the bureaucratic rulers of the satellite state as against the master state; unaccompanied by the social revolutionary upheavals which are the decisive characteristic of the new era definitively ushered in by 1956. Yet in its time the Titoist break with Moscow was properly hailed as a momentous step in the disintegration of Stalinist power, its "beginnings of the end," while at the same time socialists combated illusions about the "democratization" or non-Stalinist nature of this Titoism. On this basis also, socialists properly came out for the defense of Tito-Yugoslavia's national sovereignty against attack by Russia, while at the same time according no kind of political support to the Tito regime itself.

The phenomenon of Titoism, even though accompanied by no social revolution, gave rise to sweeping illusions of democratization and de-Stalinization. These illusions were fostered by three types of steps taken by the Tito regime while remaining entirely within the political and social framework of totalitarian bureaucratic collectivism: (a) measures of de-Russification; elimination of Stalinist particularities which arose from the national development of the system under Russian conditions, or for specifically Russian national interests, which however were either meaningless or harmful in terms of a Yugoslav national version of the same system; (b) measures to eliminate excesses or excrescences of the system; (c) concessions to popular discontent or demands designed to quiet disaffection at home particularly in the face of Russian pressure, the biggest single concession being decollectivization and lowered demands on the peasantry. In a whole series of other respects also, such as attempts at debureaucratization, decentralization, and in general various experiments on how to loosen up or give an appearance of loosening up while still remaining within totalitarian framework, the Titoist regime pioneered in taking measures which anticipated, in type and even in detail, the measures talked about or even sometimes taken by the satellite regimes in the post-20th Congress period of "de-Stalinization."

(4) But outside of Yugoslavia, world Stalinism seemed even after 1948 to consolidate itself in East Europe, in China and in Russia itself. It did not appear

to have been basically shaken; national-Stalinist ("Titoist") leaders in other states, or those whom the Russians feared might become such, were repressed and purged. At the same time it became increasingly clear — what may have been true even before — that Mao's China, while an integral part of the Stalinist world, was an example of successful Titoism, that is, of effective national independence from Moscow on the part of a Stalinist state, in the capacity of at least a junior partner, not a mere satellite or puppet, and to an indeterminate extent a junior partner with paramount regional rights for its Asian region.

(5) This picture of consolidation, relative stability and dynamically growing power and self-confidence seemed to be the situation on the eve of Stalin's death in 1953. His death and its consequences showed, however, that behind the totalitarian facade was, rather, weakness — panic — fear — seething hatreds — popular discontent from the bottom to the top of society — not at all a stable or even a stabilizable social system but one which was and is in chronic crisis which is broken only by acute crises.

(6) The first consequence of Stalin's death was, therefore, a period of "relaxation" — a period in which the Kremlin heirs sought to ease up on the pressure below in order to tide them over a critical period. It is this period and policy of "relaxation" which gave rise to a new outburst of illusions about "democratization" and "liberalization" of the regime by itself — its self-reform in a democratic socialist direction. In point of fact, however, the policy of relaxation, and all measures associated with it, flowed from five considerations — three of these being similar to or analogous to the three which operated in the case of Titoism, plus two others of great importance.

The first three are as follows:

(a) "De-Stalinization" in the personal sense, that is, the sloughing off of some of the adventitious imposition on the regime due to the whims, idiosyncrasies, ~~co~~erchets, quirks or kinks of the individual but absolute dictator Stalin. (E.g., the abolition of the official canonization of Lysenkoism, whose rise was reportedly due to Stalin's personal intervention, which had not roots in the interests of either the state or the system itself, though the system made possible and even inevitable such deformation.) This is analogous to the factor of de-Russification which was listed above in the case of Titoism.

(b) Measures to eliminate excesses or excrescences. (E.g., letting down of the bars against the depiction of romantic love in approved fiction.)

(c) Concessions, in fact or promise, to aspirations denoted by mass discontent. The biggest concession, at least in promise, was the Malenkov line of increasing consumers goods and cutting down on the emphasis on heavy industry.

(7) The fourth consideration is that the great relaxation after Stalin's was also, in one aspect, one of the periodic swings in the alternating movement characteristic of this bureaucratic-collectivist system, from "soft" to "hard" and back again.

Basically, the periods of hard or soft pressure derive from the relations, within the process of production, between the tops of the state apparatus of terror, down through the echelons of command of the dominant bureaucracu, to the masses of workers, as further discussed below; i.e., the intensification or easing of the pressures and demands laid down from the top for the degree of exploitation and sacrifice extorted from the factories and farms. But this also sets the climate for all other sectors of life, since in general it determines the degree of terror which has to be organized over the whole of the society in order to repress the hostility and tensions engendered,

Every period of "hard" pressure is necessarily accompanied by greater bureaucratism and an intensification of all the evils that flow from this in this society, and therefore generates in turn the opinion in the bureaucracy that a let-up is needed in order to correct these increasingly exaggerated abuses and to compensate for the particular type of one-sided development that they cause. Likewise, every period of "soft" pressure, by leading eventually to a falling-off in production for other reasons and to illusions that further gains might be made by the masses if their disaffection were further implemented, also engenders a tendency to the bureaucracy to make a change back, as these undesired consequences threaten to get out of hand. This is the general reason for the characteristic alternating pattern of hard and soft periods; but there is no economic automatism about this pattern since it is politically conditioned.

The period up to Stalin's death had been a "hard" one, which in turn had succeeded the last wartime period when a good deal of general looseness prevailed in many economic and social spheres due to the embroilment of the regime in an external life-or-death struggle — i.e., a "soft" period. However, if this "hard" and "soft" pattern is traced back, not cramming events in an arbitrary molds but detecting the general tendency, then through the zigzag alternation there also appears the tendency for the hard zigzags to get harder, that is, for greater draconic efforts of terroristic pressure to be necessary in order to drive the Russian people to the same exertions.

Because Stalin's death came at the high point of a "hard" period and was necessarily succeeded by a "soft" period, an important error has been crystallized in common terminology: the term "Stalinism" has come to be reserved in popular journalism for the "hard" policy while the "soft" policy is mechanically interpreted as a turn away from Stalinism. This is unfortunate from the point of view of better political understanding, since the fact is that Stalin had and used both at different times; so also did Beria, whose identification with "hard" Stalinism is dubious, and who indeed first came to power as secret-police chief as the executor of a "soft" turn.

(8) The fifth consideration shaping the Greater Relaxation after Stalin's death was factional division inside the Kremlin leadership, using this term to denote anything from power- or clique-struggles or tendency lineups however shifting, to definite factions (whose existence is dubious). In general the underlying problem behind this division arises from the hard-or-soft issue as discussed above.

Disagreement at the top helps to create a simulacrum of "democratization" — or rather, produces some of the phenomena which gets hailed by gullible observers as evidence for democratization. For example, the occasional appearance of contradictory views in the press does not argue the existence of democratic differences of opinion but indicates that the views on top are neither steady nor certain.

(9) No one individual Vozhd could hope to succeed Stalin immediately. The evidence is for the existence of a muted struggle for dominance in the Kremlin, a struggle in which the first decisive loser was Beria; second Malenkov, though far less decisively; third Molotov, to the extent of a partial humiliation; these three being the triumvirate which had seemed to take over the top leadership at Stalin's bier; and their decline brought the ascendancy of Khrushchev as the front-runner, apparently still a distance from unchallenged power as The arbiter of the system.

It is now clear, however, that if Malenkov was not physically liquidated after his fall from top place, it was because of the continuing power struggle in which he played a role, and not because of any reform in the system or its leaders.

The system, after Stalin's death, demanded the collective rule of the top leadership, in the absence of an individual successor to the arbitership; at the same time the longer-range demand of the system is for a supreme Arbiter who can resolve the questions that cannot be resolved by democratic discussion among the hierarchy. It is not possible to have any degree of genuine democratic exchange of opinion, let alone democratic decision, among a limited stratum of the bureaucracy, except as an unstable transition, a temporary conditions, in the passage back to rule by arbiter — or forward to the falling apart of the system.

It has become fashionable to say that the de-Stalinization process is "irreversible." This is not true except in the longer-range historical sense in which the doom of Stalinism is inevitable. Indeed, the tendency to return to a "hard" policy and even to one-man rule is inherent in the system. Whether this tendency works itself out or not will depend in the last analysis on the growth of the anti-Stalinist revolution. In short, it is only revolution which will make genuine de-Stalinization "irreversible."

(10) The Great Relaxation that followed Stalin's death was, therefore, a turn taken from weakness and not from strength. The heirs were weakened by the death of the tyrant who had tightly kept the lid on, with ruthless force concentrating all threads of real power in his own hands. and now, facing the angers and resentments of the people, the Kremlin bureaucracy eased up in order to blunt the cutting edge of the hatreds that surround them.

This ease-up, while primarily motivated by internal pressures, had to have its counterpart also in foreign policy. Promises of internal relaxation must be accompanied by evidence that the international pressure is, or is going to be, less. Relaxation in the cold war is necessary both as a motivation for explaining the internal relaxation, and for giving a seeming guarantee that the latter will be forthcoming. Hence the "geneva spirit" period.

At the same time the international relaxation was also needed by the fact that the Kremlin, in the "panic and disarray" after the death of Stalin, could not afford any belligerent international incidents developing; its attention had to be concentrated within, for the next period.

(11) The internal relaxation was an internal appeasement: who and what had to be appeased? It is not a question of any claim that imminent revolution from below stared the Kremlin in the face after the death of Stalin. There can be a long road between a decisive revolution and, merely, the beginning of the break-up of the bureaucratic monolith's stranglehold on the country through the growth of unrest and discontent.

What is basic is to register the fact that behind the monolithic front of Russian totalitarianism is a seething cauldron of hatred of the ruling bureaucracy, hostility to its oppression, resentment against its grinding exploitation, and enmity to its masters.

This was manifested during the Second World War by the mass desertions from the Russian army, by the subjects of the Kremlin who were even willing to fight for the Nazis, and by the initial greetings given by the peoples of the Ukraine and other border areas to the Hitlerite invasion.

It was manifested by the great slave-labor revolts in Vorkuta, Norilsk and other concentration camps.

It is manifested by the tremendous machinery of repression and terror which the Kremlin needs to maintain in order to stay in power.

The new Russian working class, enormously increased by industrialization and educated by decades of urban life and organization, are waiting as the grave-diggers of the system that created it.

This is the great reservoir of revolutionary energy which, once released, will sweep over the Stalinist power, and of which the bureaucracy lives in fear.

(12) But it is not only a question of the revolutionary discontent of the masses. It is also a question — and today, more immediately so, of appeasing the mass of the bureaucratic ranks themselves, the secondary echelons of the ruling class itself.

These ranks are driven by the Kremlin as ruthlessly as they are expected to drive the workers; in every respect they are the transmission channels of upper policy. This ruling class is not a leisure class; it is frenetically driven class; but like all ruling classes its members, not satisfied merely with the superior privileges and income which their positions afford, aspire to a "normalization" — the right to enjoy their privileges in undisturbed peace and security. Of this they have little.

To the echelons of the bureaucracy, therefore, relaxation has the most literal meaning: an end to, or an easing-up on, the unending merciless drive to fulfill the demands from on top, to fulfill a plan which is always breaking down from its own disproportionalities, its own wastes, its own parasitism and unplannableness. This drive from above is not fortuitous or dispensable on the part of the tops. It is a result of the fact that this system is (a) no longer, as capitalism was, coordinated or regulated by the impersonal "blind" workings of the market, while at the same time (b) it cannot be coordinated and regulated by a workably planned mechanism which can substitute for the market — as long as there is no adequate possibility for a constant check on and correction of the Plan by give-and-take from below such as is impossible within a totalitarian framework. This requires socialist democracy, which alone makes possible a genuine planned economy. Here we have the basic contradiction of the system.

This bureaucratic system seeks, but cannot find, any means of keeping its economy functioning on an even keel. This is a society where economics and politics are fused: that which under capitalism is accomplished by a semi-automatic economic mechanism is here (as well as under socialism) to be accomplished by the political institutions. At every step the big political whip must do what many economic whips do under capitalism. That is, totalitarian terror is an integral, built-in and inescapable component of this social system, not an excess or a "mistake" or a superstructure.

The bureaucratic planning of the economy requires terror, in the absence of workers' democracy — and in turn, terror makes impossible any genuine planning.

Thus the unremitting pressure from the top down, since it naturally attenuates as it filters down the line toward the bottom, must be given a hard and fierce impetus as it starts out from the top, so that it will still have moving power a few echelons below; and this pressure cannot be dispensed with, without setting in motion forces which will overrelax the whole system til it starts falling apart. This is the rationale of, and the inevitable drive behind, the "hard" factions. At the same time, as we have seen, there are times — as on

Stalin's death; as there was whenever a "hard" period was threatening to raise resentment to an uncomfortable pitch — when a continuation of the hard line can be seen, especially by the more sensitive bureaucrats, as dangerous, when, therefore, a "soft" turn gains adherents . . .

And so the zigzags of the regime, and the division of the bureaucracy into tendency line-ups, are brought about by the most basic drives of the social system. It was this that was exacerbated to critical levels by the death of Stalin and the acute emergence of the problems it released or triggered off.

(13) The two factors discussed — the discontent of the masses, and the discontents of the ranks of the bureaucracy — are not separate factors. The latter is significant as a transmitting mechanism for the former, that is, for the basic class struggle in this society.

The aspirations of the bureaucrats for normalization and relaxation act as a transmitting belt for the pressures of disaffection, sporadic sabotage, slow-down and non-cooperation that arises from the masses. If the regime followed (say) more consumer goods, the workers would work better, problems would be fewer, quotas could be filled more easily, the dangers of failure would be less, etc.; and so the middle-echelon bureaucrats could live a happier, less tense, more relaxed and "normal" life in which to enjoy their perquisites and privileges. So it is in the interests of a section of the bureaucrats to be for more consumer goods, or other ameliorations of the workers' lot — i.e., in this and other instances to act as channels to pass on the pressure of a working class which has no democratic channels to express its demands — no channels at all to express its demands except to keep the economy in crisis, to keep the bureaucracy in fear and insecurity.

Thus, up through the class structure the demands of the mass of people fight back against the whip of the bureaucracy, that is, against the totalitarian terror which is an integral component of this economy.

In the last analysis, the appeasement to which the post-Stalin relaxation was directed was appeasement of potentially revolutionary mass discontent from below, which had to be safety-valved. Through the mirror of the Kremlin's "disarray and panic" at the death of Stalin, the next Russian Revolution can be seen incubating.

(14) Short of the next Russian Revolution, it is the anti-Stalinist revolution in the conquered satellite empire that has exploded first, before the heartland of Stalinism. For this, however, at least the weakening of the heartland was a necessary preliminary. Just as we have seen since the war that world capitalism has decayed and lost power most catastrophically first on its peripheries — in the colonial worlds — so also with regard to the Stalinist system; both brown around the edges first. Hence the Czech demonstration, East Germany, Poznan, Poland and Hungary.

Politically and socially, these revolutionary upheavals have four basic characteristics:

(a) They fuse the nationalist revolution and the social revolution in a single interlocked struggle; i.e., the demand for national freedom from Russian domination, with the demands on the native Stalinist regimes for genuine democratization and an end to bureaucratic exploitation.

(b) The central political revolutionary demands of these movements spell out the demand for democracy. This in oneword is the program of the anti-Stalinist revolution. This social revolution is a democratic revolution.

(c) This revolutionary movement bases itself in the mass on the maintenance of social or collective ownership of the basic means of production, maintenance of the "nationalized economy" and against any restoration of capitalism or the old regime. The social program of the revolution is the democratization of the statified economy. This essentially defines it as the socialist revolution.

(d) Far and away the leadership in this revolution has been taken by the working class, with strong allies from the working class students and from the intellectuals, the latter two elements playing a big role especially in triggering the revolutionary actions; and with united support from the peasants, though more passively. Thus while the revolution is national in scope, it is the working class which stands at the head of the nation. This revolution is proletarian both in program and in leadership.

Thus the national revolution, the social revolution, the democratic revolution all fuse into the proletarian socialist revolution -- under this system of despotism which by its very nature tends to fuse all politics, economics and social life into a monolithic unity.

(15) As this revolution, both in Russia and more broadly in the Stalinist world, comes visibly closer and its face becomes clearer; as the prospect of seeing this revolution in our day changes from a hope or dream to a practical and real probability, so also is the line drawn sharper between the proponents of reform or revolution in the Stalinist world.

Those are the terms in which it is posed: reform or revolution.

There is, of course, an obvious analogy at first blush with the historic issue of Reform or Revolution as it was fought out in the socialist movement with respect to capitalism; and indeed there are many parallels possible which are not necessarily accidental. But still we cannot merely carry over the old controversy and its arguments but have to think the new problem out afresh, for it is a different social system and a different world context which is involved here.

With this basic caution, we nevertheless add: On the issue of reform or revolution in the Stalinist world, we stand for revolutionary socialism; we expect and look to the revolutionary overthrow of the totalitarian Stalinist regimes by mass action from below; as against those who preach the inevitability, or desirability or expectation of an inner self-reform of the bureaucratic-collectivist ruling class which will hand down democracy to the masses from above, which will bring about the self-democratization of the bureaucracy,

(16) As the revolution against the Stalinist power comes closer, the reformists on this question have increased their ranks, at the same time that their political basis becomes ever more untenable. This viewpoint now extends out from the ranks of the Stalinoids, fellow-travelers, socialists with pro-Stalinist illusions, etc., out into -- far into -- the ranks of the imperialist bourgeoisie itself.

The common denominator tends to be rationalized in the theoretics of Isaac Deutscher; and "Deutscherism" tends to be an umbrella for various kinds of Stalino-reformism. With the discreditment of those approaches which paint the Stalinist bureaucracies in a more favorable light, all theories and views about the reformability of the bureaucratic-collectivist ruling class tend to reduce themselves to Deutscher's formula.

According to this formula, in brief, Stalin's monstrous form of totalitarianism, while regrettable, was historically inevitable in order to bring about a rapid enough industrialization and modernization of Russia, which in turn was

indispensable in order to lay the basis for or build "socialism;" and so this process, which was inevitable, was also historically progressive. Now this task has been accomplished, deplorable though the methods may have been, and now this totalitarian dictatorship is no longer necessary; on the contrary, it is a drag on the further development of these "socialist" economies. This the new masters in the Kremlin realize; and Stalin's death fortunately gave them the opportunity to start turning the helm of state toward the democratization process which history and their own aspirations demand. If they are not scared off this road by threats from the capitalist west, or scared off by the threats of subversive "anti-socialists" forces within, they will sooner or later bring Russia, and her dependencies and partners, along the road of the complete liquidation of Stalinism, of dictatorship, or terror, and to a genuinely socialist democracy. It follows from this that any revolutionary struggle against this bureaucracy's power, even if detonated by otherwise justified demands, is counter-revolutionary, will only postpone socialist democratization can be effective only as a tool of the imperialists, and must therefore be deplored if not prevented and repressed.

(17) If it clear, first of all, what this view has in common with old-fashioned reformism (i.e., under capitalism), different though they are in so many vital respects. Common is the underlying distrust of the action of the masses themselves; hostility to the basic conception of Marxism that the emancipation of the working class must be by its own action, that it cannot be looked for to some condescending savior; that the socialist goal is not a good that will be handed down out of the goodness of their enlightened hearts by benevolent masters but must be taken by the organized strength of a revolutionary movement; that genuine democracy can be attained only insofar as the masses take the political stage as self-conscious actors and doers, not merely as objects of history.

There is nothing whatever so basic to revolutionary Marxism as this. It is its opposite that is characteristic of all forms of reformism, opportunism or capitulation to the ruling powers of the world, whatever their class nature may be. On the theoretical plane it is this which permits us to unite the new Stalin-reformism with the old reformism under capitalism.

(18) The political tendencies which are adopting, or adapting to, a species of Deutscherite reformism are increasing, for very understandable reasons. In the first place, there are the thinkers, braintrusts and pundits of the Western imperialist camp, in and out of the government, who have their own reasons for hating, fearing and deploring the prospect of uncontrolled revolutionary mass action breaking out anywhere. Afraid of revolution, they are equally afraid of revolution on the other side of the "Iron Curtain," insofar as they understand that the flames will inescapably tend to leap across the Curtain, which is not of iron, and extend to their world.

They look upon the oppressed masses of the Stalinist world as fit only to be auxiliaries to their own armies in the event of war breaking out between the two imperialist camps; they do not want them to rise up and fight for their own freedom; they want them to "preserve themselves" so as to be available to fight as tools of the western capitalist military camp. They do not look to their revolutionary struggle as a means of preventing imperialist war, but only as a means of fighting a war.

Short of the outbreak of war, they hope to make an imperialist deal with Moscow, whereby the Russians will agree to "contain themselves" peaceably in exploitation of their own empire and not bother the West, while the capitalist world guarantees their (the Russians') "security" and peace of mind in running

their own vassalries. This "peaceful" perspective is only endangered by the outbreak of uncontrolled revolutionary struggle in the Stalinist states, for such struggle makes the Russians fear that all their power and pelf is at stake and endangered, when the capitalist statesmen really want to allay any such fears.

Such an imperialist deal, which is the only form of a peace policy that the world's leaders can envisage, is called "peaceful coexistence" when it is propounded by the Stalinists, under which label it is often execrated by all good American party-liners and even viewed with suspicion by liberals, some of whom invent other labels like "competitive coexistence" to take off the curse. But whether labeled "peaceful coexistence" or the "containment policy," which basically means the same thing, the end is the same: an imperialist deal over the passive bodies of the satellites and subject peoples of the one or the colonial prizes and exploited peoples of the other.

This bourgeois-imperialist form of Deutscherite reformism, therefore, while it has its own political roots and objectives, and because it shares in the detestation of revolution on either side of the lines, tends to set forth as the realizable goal of its imperialist deal a reformed Stalinist bureaucracy that will at last have seen the light and made the compact. From this follows some of the same illusions about the potentialities of a Stalinist inner-transformation as are articulated and theorized by Deutscher and his co-thinkers from quite a different political premises.

(19) In the second place, all the neutralist currents in the bourgeoisie (in France for example) are even more directly impelled to believe that the Stalinist totalitarians either are or can be in process of reforming themselves and their system. In the mind of all forms of neutralism which depend on the reconciliation of the rival war camps, illusions about the Stalinist regimes (as well as about capitalism) are inevitable, for if the two camps are really to be united in amity, then this must be considered possible; and if it is possible, it is because the imperialist rivalry is not inherent; and specifically, the Stalinist totalitarian leaders must be viewed as reasonable people genuinely interested in peace above all, if only their understandable skittishness about capitalist encirclement can be cured. At any rate they cannot be as black as painted.

(20) The strong neutralist currents in the socialist movements of various countries, typified by the Bevanites, often share this approach and in addition, may be subject to another disease, which spreads as a blight specifically in socialist ranks, separate from, though often connected with, neutralism. This is the blight of pro-Stalinist illusions, which characteristically view the Stalinist regimes as some kind of socialist states, though distorted, detestable, degenerate, or deplorable kinds of socialist states, or "workers' states," or some sort of progressive form of society. According to this, this otherwise detestable "kind of socialism" must be disembarassed of its unpleasant features in order to being out the pristine lines of its intrinsic "socialism"; and to this end, we must be free with sympathy for the "socialist" objectives of this deplorable regime while remaining kindly and helpful in persuading its leading hangmen to become less degenerate.

According to the varieties of this strain of thought, the "socialist" essence of the Stalinist states (which is equated by a vulgar economism with the simple existence of statified property) must willynilly bring their dictators to socialist democracy as the political corollary of the economic "socialist" forms. Thus, pro-Stalinism reinforces Deutscherite reformism.

(21) If these and other varieties coalesce around Deutscherite reformism in looking to the self-reform and self-democratization from above of the Stalinist regimes, it is not the result of fortuitous agreement but the natural common ground resulting from rejection of a revolutionary perspective. All of these people become enemies or opponents or derogators of the proletarian socialist revolution against Stalinism. We stand firmly on the basis of this revolution, alongside an equally firm position of opposition to capitalist and the capitalist-imperialist war camp. We expect that the forces of socialist revolution in both halves of the world will inspire each other; while in both camps the social-reformists and the Stalino-reformists advise, "Be prudent...do not fight for what you need — your masters will hand it to you freely if only you convince them that they have nothing to fear from you!"

Socialist Policy in the Anti-Stalinist Revolution

(22) Our fundamental guide in the anti-Stalinist revolution is the conception of the "permanent revolution" in an adapted form — i.e., the need for the continuous, or uninterrupted, transition in a rising line from the nationalist revolution to the social revolution (this applies outside the Great-Russian heartland) or from the democratic revolution to the proletarian socialist revolution, as discussed in point 14.

We reject any notion that this revolution must restrict itself to "stages" lest it go "too far" for any given period (tactical considerations aside, of course). There are indeed likely to be stages, but the point is that it is not the vanguard that must retrain events to prescribed stages.

(23) As against the totalitarian Stalinist regimes, we support every democratic movement, all democratic elements, every measure and every force and every step to create genuinely democratic institutions.

The revolutionary events of 1956 make even more important the view which we set down in our 1949 resolution:

"The aim of all opposition in such a state inevitably centers around the demands of democracy. Not only is this demand the essence of the socialist struggle under the bureaucratic-collectivist regime, it is at the same time the program around which the widest strata of the population can be effectively mobilized...

"The task of the Marxists, therefore, is to enter into battle against the main enemy / the ruling bureaucracy/ alongside every genuinely popular movement of resistance to the despotism of the state."

(24) The following consideration is vital to the relationships between conscious revolutionary socialist elements and other democratic elements in the anti-Stalinist revolution.

Under Stalinism the fight for democracy has a different political and social content than under capitalism. Under capitalism, any fight whose social vision is merely limited to general democratic objectives and asks no other changes thereby assumes the continued existence of the capitalist social system, which negates the possibility of full genuine democracy; and so revolutionary socialists, in addition to being the most consistent supporters of every democratic measure — and in order to be so — must themselves spell out the social content of the democracy for which they fight — namely, spell out the socialist objective of the struggle for democracy.

The character of the Stalinist social system makes the case basically different under that system. There the struggle for democracy -- democratic rights, institutions and freedoms -- takes place in a society where the basic means of production are already statified, where the political institutions (the state) that are to be democratized are already the owner of the economy.

Here a struggle whose vision is limited to democratic transformation and asks no other changes is one which assumes the continued maintenance of the forms of the collectivized economy. Here the struggle for democracy automatically tend to turn into the struggle for democratic socialism, regardless of the consciousness with which the struggle begins.

(25) This is not to say that anyone who calls for democratic change is ipso facto fighting for socialism. There may possibly be remnants of elements who may still think in terms of capitalist restoration. But (a) such tendencies are enormously stronger among the emigres from the satellite states than among the people themselves; and (b) all evidence shows that insofar as there are such elements among the people, they are a tiny and unimportant minority.

(26) In the anti-Stalinist revolution, therefore, we vigorously support all tendencies, struggles and steps toward a revolutionary democratic opposition to the regime. This political position does not prejudice any questions of revolutionary tactics in the detailed course of a revolutionary upheaval, such as can be decided only by militants on the spot; it defines our side in the struggle.

(27) We recognize that, as in Hungary, a revolutionary democratic upsurge against the Stalinist power may well also churn up, from the dregs of the society, not only the mass of the working-class democracy, but also whatever specks of the old reaction still exist. One of the tasks of the socialist workers in such a revolution is naturally to isolate and quarantine such elements and prevent them from exercising any influence. There has indeed been no important evidence in either the Hungarian or Polish revolutions that such elements, including anti-Semitic elements, played any substantial role in the upsurge. But in any case, whatever the eventuality, socialists would energetically combat any attempt by enemies of the revolution to smear the revolutionary democratic opposition by pointing to the existence of any such elements, even where they really do exist. We say candidly and in advance that any mass, especially all-national, sweeping upsurge may possibly exhibit such elements among them, whether to a minute and insignificant degree or whether to a degree that would jeopardize the revolution, but in any case, we regard this as a problem of "our side," and not a reason for turning against "our side."

(28) The brunt of socialists' analyses and propaganda must be, not the exaggerated dangers of "reactionary" elements within the general revolutionary democratic attack on the regime--dangers which may exist, but which the healthy dynamism unleashed by a genuine revolution can adequately handle, we are convinced --but the brunt must be directed against all those regime forces which set themselves to bridge the revolution and lead the people back into the confines of totalitarianism as expeditiously as possible and as soon as the revolutionary unrest can be transquilized.

(29) In the Hungarian Revolution, where -- due to the Russian intervention -- the nationalist revolution and the social revolution were completely fused from virtually the beginning, there was no stopping-point possible between the one and the other. The revolution also broke open the Nagy-Kadar coalition, forcing its individual members to fall one way or the other. Thus, Nagy finished

by going along completely with the revolutionary democracy, while Kadar, despite his record of Stalinist-discidence, finished by becoming a tool of the Russians.

The Polish development differed in this respect — basically because the revolutionary democratic movement there had developed earlier, more strongly in advance of the crisis, and had cast its shadow before, more menacingly for a longer time; whereas the Hungarian crisis burst upon the country more unexpectedly and improvisedly and with less preparation. Thus—as in the analogous contrast been the German and Austrian revolutions of 1918 — the revolution which was less deeping-going and deeprootedly prepared was the one which was the most dramatic and violent.

In Poland the "thaw" — a loosening of the bonds of totalitarian restraint in various field of life, most prominently at first in the field of cultural and intellectual life — began even before the 20th Congress; and soon after the Congress, took the lead by far in making Poland's ferment of "de-Stalinization" deeper, more stormy and less "controlled" than in any other satellite, Hungary included.

This was so because: (a) the political experience and tradition of a proletariat that was more advanced and better trained politically in social struggles than any other in the Russian empire with the possible exception of the East German; (b) the strong roots of nationalist aspirations directed against oppression from Russia; (c) the economic exploitation of the country practised by the Russians.

On top of the stormier development of "de-Stalinization" in Poland came the blow-off in Poznan. While this could be militarily suppressed and localized at the time, it acted as an advance warning to the Polish regime.

This is what basically accounts for the fact that after Poznan the decisive section of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy — including Ochab and Cyrankiewicz — went over to the thesis that the developing revolution could be averted, and discontent confined within the bounds of the existing system, only by the Communist Party leadership themselves running to the head of the movement by timely concessions. Hence, Gomułka was released and instaled as leader to be the symbol and organizer of the contemplated program of anticipatory reform, since (a) he was not discredited in the eyes of the people, and (b) his record and views on a number of points were consistent with these concessions, unlike the others.

(30) The main concessions made to curb the developing and seething Polish Revolution was a curbing of Russian influence, designed to take some of the nationalist steam out of the growing social-revolutionary movement. As we know from the experience of Titoism, such a step is not to be understood merely as a reluctant concession on the part of the Polish Stalinists. They are for obtaining a maximum measure of national independence from the Russians; this is the "Titoist" component which is an inherent drive behind every satellite regime, even the most subservient, let alone the Polish. The revolution developing under the Polish bureaucracy, however, made this course not simply a preferable good that they could aspire to, but a pressing necessity. Moreover, by pointing to the threatening revolution they could hope to convince the Russians to agree to a reluctant acceptance of some "anti-Russian" steps as a lesser evil. This is what happened in October.

Thus, by balancing between the revolution from below and the Russian power which overshadowed them, the new regime gained nationalist concessions (de-Russification of the army, ouster of the symbol Rokossovsky, etc.), though the Russian troops still remained in the country. With the popular credit thus obtained, the regime swung into a drive to tranquilize the uncontrolled revolutionary ferment among the people and even among many strata of the Communist militants and intellectuals.

Outside of the de-Russification concessions, major concessions were made by the regime to the two social forces that naturally stood outside the main arenas of the revolutionary democratic stirrings: the peasantry and the Catholic Church. The peasantry were granted a wide measure of decollectivization, reduction of collection quotas and rights of private ownership. The church was given the right of religious instruction in the public schools themselves, in violation of democratic concepts of church-state separation, as well as remission of previous undemocratic restrictions on the church, release of prisoners, right of ecclesiastical appointment, etc.

The reason for these major concessions in these directions was to strengthen and stabilize the regime by leaning - across the working class and dissident intelligentsia - on these two social forces as a counterpose to the main counters of the revolutionary democratic opposition.

In this way the regime hopes to stabilize itself within the framework of a bureaucratic-collectivist system whose totalitarian structure has been cracked wide open in all directions since October, and which they could thereupon hope to re-totalitarianize, even if preferably on a more national Communist basis than before.

This is the general class pattern of the Polish Revolution after October.

(31) In all this, then, it is essential to keep in mind that what we are dealing with here is not a study of good or bad reforms bestowed by a good or bad leader at the head of a regime, but rather the gains (or losses) registered by a revolution, a mass revolutionary upheaval which has shaken the Polish totalitarianism, loosened it up, qualified its ability to operate as such in almost every field, in proportion to the storminess of mass action; which has even here and there, and for a while, brought about a degree of independent organization from below, particularly in the student and youth fields, though the main advances of this sort were soon suppressed by the regime's edict or pressure.

This revolution is not the work of the regime or any of its leaders but is inevitably directed against this regime; and the regime and its leaders exert themselves to bridle and quiet this revolution by every means from peaceful persuasion where possible to political pressure to police action.

Our political support — without involving any commitment on tactics — goes to "our side", the revolutionary democratic forces who, whether or not they support a popular leader as a symbol, are engaged on a course which is the deadly enemy of the regime, and which, if pursued (however prudently), will bring them inescapably into a life-and-death clash with the regime; and in no case does our political support or confidence go to the Gomułka regime, critically or otherwise.

As in the case also of Tito, we are for the defense of Poland, under any national regime including Gomułka's, as against Russian or other foreign assault or intervention designed to force it back into vassalage, in any struggle where the national right to self-determination is indeed the dominant element.

But political support to Gomulka is not involved here. In case of any hypothetical Natolin-Stalinist putsch in which Gomulka willy-nilly acts the part of a "Kerensky" as against the Stalinist "Kornilov", we are equally ready to defend Gomulka in the same spirit (Kerensky vs Kornilov); though it must be admitted in all political realism that it is difficult to envisage such a putsch unconnected with Russian intervention. In any case, again, political support to the Gomulka regime is not involved in any of these hypotheticalities; and the real situation and real problems of the revolutionary left in Poland have little relation to these hypothetical questions, which we answer because they have been raised.

The revolutionary pressure of the people can impel or encourage this Gomulka regime to grant further concessions of a nationalist or social character, and such concessions and gains socialists will welcome and support, whether in the nature of further de-Russification or more democratic leeway; but in the last analysis such gains will be possible only as by-products of revolutionary pressure and not of the regime's magnanimity.

(33) The working class in the anti-Stalinist revolution has no reason to be wary of democratic concessions to non-working-class strata who are also oppressed by the common enemy, the ruling bureaucracy; on the contrary, socialists should fight not only for workers' power against this bureaucracy, but also for the legitimate interests of all other elements in the society who should be its allies in the struggle.

(a) Freedom of the peasants from forced collectivization: - The working class has no interest in maintaining bureaucratic collectivization of the land, into which the great majority of the peasantry have been forced under Stalinism. Under conditions of revolution, as was true notably in Poland, the peasantry may abandon the collectives en masse; they must have complete freedom to do so, and in such exercise of their right the democratized state would seek to organize the return to them of the property which the bureaucratic despotism took away. The socialists do not advocate or support decollectivization; but they do guarantee the complete and untrammelled right to decollectivization. As always, the socialists aim will be, in step with material possibilities, to lead the peasantry voluntarily toward free cooperatives or other free collective forms which can utilize the land most productively, by the power of example and encouragement.

(b) Private property: - the Stalinist over-bureaucratization of the economic system in the Eastern European countries has also tended to involve over-statification, - the statification of all sectors regardless of how economically ready for socialization they may be. It is entirely possible that a revolutionary socialist government would find it desirable, transitionally, at least, to allow greater leeway for private property and private small business in subordinate sectors of the economy, particularly where free collective or socialized forms are not yet feasible in terms of economic efficiency. This must be understood quite apart from any tendencies toward capitalist restoration.

(c) Multi-party system: - When socialists demand complete political freedom in these states, they demand freedom for all, not only for themselves. We repudiate any notion that the new political freedom should be extended only as far as pro-socialist parties and no further. While we are entirely confident that a genuine popular democratic revolution will be led by the working class and be socialist in its content and program, we are on principle opposed to limiting the legality of new parties or political activity only to those which purport to be pro-socialist, or worse yet, only to those which are accepted as pro-socialist, by the government (even a democratic government). We are for the right also to reconstitute even the old bourgeois parties, if any wish to do so, or new parties which are pro-bourgeois in anyone's view. We do not believe that the revolution will be endangered by such freedom.

(d) Church rights: - Among the social forces repressed by the Stalinist dictatorship in many of these states has been the Church, especially the Catholic Church. We are for the restoration of complete religious freedom and self-government of the churches, in no way controlled by the government. We are against any intervention of the government or any other outside power into the internal affairs of the church, such as in the naming of bishops or other church officers. At the same time we maintain the traditional socialist insistence on complete separation of church and state in every respect, including the completely secular character of public education.

(34) The leading social force in the anti-Stalinist revolution, however, is the working class. The experience in both Hungary and Poland has shown that the revolutionary working class spontaneously organized its forces into Workers Councils as its revolutionary instrument against the state, and that these Workers Councils tended to assume the character of a dual power challenging the old state or assuming its power after the shattering of the old state.

Socialists must be the most consistent and militant supporters of the Workers Council systems which arise in the revolution, and of their expansion, seeing these not simply as technical factory instruments of locally limited power but as the formations which can link up horizontally and vertically - nationally - as the basis for the new revolutionary government, the latter's roots in the factories. The old bureaucratic apparatus cannot be taken over the revolution, along with its discredited and compromised cadres who did the bidding and dirty work of the Stalinists; this apparatus must be swept off the board. The apparatus to replace it as the state power can arise out of the Council system.

(35) The revolutions of 1956 raise the question of the party in the anti-Stalinist revolution, and also present some important experiences toward answering this question - namely, the general relationship between spontaneous revolt and conscious organization in the revolution.

The experience so far has tended to put the spotlight on the great drama of spontaneous revolt from below. One of the great and indelible contributions of the Hungarian and Polish revolutions is their final and conclusive proof that the triumph of Stalinism in a country does not turn the workers into hypnotized robots, brainwashed by an all-powerful propaganda and terror machine, a la Orwell's 1984 or Hannah Arendt's inverted realization of totalitarianism. This eliminates one of the great motives for capitulation to Western imperialism under the plea that it is the only force that can save us from this otherwise invulnerable monster.

Contrary to the 1984 picture, this Stalinism has produced the very opposite of the dehumanized "prole"; it has produced the most sweeping, courageous, mass, united struggle for freedom in the whole history of social struggle. Above all, what has been shown is that this struggle begins by breaking out as a spontaneous one - i.e., not initiated or organized or led by any organizations or established leadership. It is therefore irrepressible.

(36) It is entirely possible for a completely spontaneous revolt to overthrow a despotic regime, especially under conditions where all sectors of the society are sympathetic to its cause. This has happened more than once in history, as in the February 1917 revolution in Russia. Considerably more difficult problems are raised, however, in the next stage - the presentation of a stable revolutionary governmental alternative to the old one, and the building of a new society. It is essentially at this point that the problem of conscious socialist organization becomes most acute.

(a) The spontaneity of the revolts against Stalinism, however, should not be exaggerated or interpreted as being complete. It is useful to emphasize their relative spontaneity in order to underline the irrepressible elements in them, but misleading to interpret this as flatly opposed to the existence of organized factors.

As a point of fact, one of the important contributions of the 1956 revolutions was precisely the demonstration that even under Stalinist totalitarianisms, and in advance of the shattering of the totalitarian framework by mass struggle - in fact as a preliminary to the mass struggle - forms of revolutionary organizations and opposition can and do spring up. Dissident elements in a semi-organized form utilized institutions and organizations sponsored by the regime itself. Of this nature was the Petofi Circle in Budapest or Pro Prostu in Warsaw. Under the gathering discontent, semi-organized factional forms even penetrated into the ruling parties themselves, as in the case of the Nagy group in the Hungarian CP. There were anticipatory splits in official organization, as in the case of the student organization in Hungary just before the uprising. Simultaneous with the upheavels, other ad-hoc organizations formed - like the "October committees" in the Polish factories, which were veritable revolutionary soviets until dissolved by Gomulka.

These organizations and forms of semi-organization were sufficient to make possible the destruction of the old state in Hungary, and in Poland the shattering of the totalitarian framework for a while, but it was precisely the inadequacy of this organizational framework which was one, and an important, contributing influence to the subsequent confusion of the revolutionary left of which the old despots could take advantage. What was missing was any over-all political leadership which could pull together the strands of revolution, point a direction, unite disparate efforts, offer a pole of clarity around which a cross-section of the nation could rally. The Nagy group of the CP could possibly have constituted such an instrument, but did not because of its orientation toward, or hesitancy about reforming the old machine instead of breaking with it. The workers Councils might have been able to throw up such a leadership if given more time, though that is not to be expected without more previous training and preparation. In any case, it is such an over-all political leadership, whatever it might be called and whatever form it might take, which would play the role of the revolutionary party.

But if the absence of a revolutionary party in any sense was one of the fatal weaknesses of the 1956 revolutions, it does not follow that such revolutions are doomed to be futile since in no case will the totalitarians allow anything like a revolutionary party to gain experience or even existence. For in both Hungary and Poland, and perhaps also in East Germany, such a revolutionary party leadership is developing now, molecularly, as a result precisely of the experiences that have been gone through: provided that by party we do not necessarily understand the type of organization known by that name elsewhere, but understand simply the separating out of a strata of leading people who link up with each other for a common action and with a common, more or less clear program.

Furthermore, if next time the few days of political freedom which the Hungarian revolution enjoyed just before November 4 are lengthened to a whole period, then from that first confused burgeoning of new political formation there is at least the possibility of hammering out a more adequate political leadership, not necessarily in one party at that.

In any case, the experience of the 1956 revolutions afford no reason to make a virtue out of the lack of conscious organization in the movement, but

but rather reasons to look forward to the remedying of this defect.

The 1956 revolutions themselves have laid down new foundations for the solution of this problem now, even though defeated or set back. For one thing that can never be restored, however stringent the re-totalitarianization of these countries becomes, is the sense of atomization of the working class, the shattering of the class into mutually suspicious and discrete fragments by the terror or secret police intimidation. Now the whole people know that everyone, or virtually everyone, hates the regime; that they the people are united in reality; that nothing can stop their assault once they rise; that they must only prepare better, more understandingly, more consistently, to win; and in this way there already exists the basis for the conscious linking-up and seeking out of new forms of organization which are needed. This is one way in which the revolutions of 1956 will be, even if in defeat, a necessary prerequisite for the final victory which is coming.

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Berg Amendments

The following two amendments are to the PC Majority Resolution on unity — Memorandum on Our Perspectives and Orientation in the Matter of Socialist Unity. (See last issue of Forum)

1. To follow, in section 3, the words "enjoying equality of rights and duties." (line 12, section 3)

Precisely because we could unite with the SP only on the basis of full rights of membership, we make clear now, while proposing unity, our criticisms of the SP's political position on questions of immediate importance, not in a harsh and hostile manner, but at the same time not in such a way as to gloss over or conceal the significance of our political differences. Only with full recognition of what we are and wherein we differ can we avoid future misunderstanding in the united movement.

2. To follow, in section 3, the words "hard-and-fast factions or sects." (line 27, section 3)

This does not mean abstaining from proposing in the Socialist Party for its adoption, our position on specific immediate crucial issues facing socialists in the fields of both domestic and foreign policy. Further, it does not mean our abstaining from writing articles explaining our fundamental theoretical approach to problems of both immediate and long-range importance

submitted by Saul Berg and Debbie Meier
Chicago, March 27, 1957