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THE 19TH CONVENTION: A TURNING POINT

Daniel Rubin

AN AMERICAN REFLECTS ON LENIN

Joseph North

A SIGNIFICANT LABOR CONFERENCE

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## The Lenin Centenary

During World War II a story made the rounds concerning a decision in Britain to honor her Soviet ally by placing a bronze plaque on the house in London in which Lenin once lived for a time. It was thought that it would be good to have on hand at the ceremony someone who had known Lenin in those days. And since Lenin had spent much of his time working in the library of the Royal Institute, the search for such a person was made there.

Finally an elderly librarian was discovered who had been there when Lenin was and who did indeed recall him. "Why yes, I remember him well," he said, "that little bald-headed man with the red beard. And do you know, I've often wondered whatever became of him."

The story takes its point, of course, from the fact that there are few people in today's world who do not know "whatever became of him." Few indeed have achieved his greatness and renown. His place in history is unique: to him it was given to be the architect and the guiding spirit of the world's first victorious socialist revolution. His was the genius that sparked the launching of mankind on the path to a new stage of social existence—to a world free of exploitation and oppression. It was he who conceived of, fought for and headed the prototype of the "party of a new kind," the revolutionary Bolshevik Party which achieved working-class political power in Russia.

Today one-third of the world has followed in their path, and new countries are moving on the road to socialism. And the influence of Lenin's ideas has spread across the entire world.

Lenin embodied in himself that rare combination of excellence in many fields. He was outstanding as both thinker and doer, as theoretician and political leader. He was the personification of Marx's famous thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point however is to *change* it."

From Lenin, more than anyone else, one can learn the meaning of the unity of theory and practice. He was at home in the complexities of philosophy and political economy and he wrote at length on these subjects, yet his writings always bore upon immediate political struggles and practical problems. Of this there are few

better illustrations than his book *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. This work, which polemized against idealist concepts in the field of physics, was at the same time an attack on the political opportunism which arose in the period of retreat following the defeat of the 1905 revolution and which found expression even in what seemed to be the most abstract realms of philosophy.

The combination of theoretician and revolutionary fighter is perhaps nowhere more strikingly revealed than in the postscript to the first edition of his *State and Revolution*. It states:

This pamphlet was written in August and September, 1917. I had already drawn up the plan for the next, the seventh chapter, on the "Experiences of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917." But, outside of the title, I did not succeed in writing a single line of the chapter; what "interfered" was the political crisis—the eve of the October Revolution of 1917. Such "interference" can only be welcomed. (International Publishers, New York, 1932.)

In a word, Lenin's brilliant defense and development of Marx's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat was cut short—by the call to put that theory into practice!

In this day, when it has become fashionable in sections of the Left to downgrade theory and to place all emphasis on activism, when people speak in utmost seriousness of abandoning all ideology, there is much to be learned from Lenin. We can learn not only from the outstanding theoretical contributions which he made, but particularly from his genius in relating theory and practice, both in his writings and in his actions.

Lenin was born on April 22, 1870. Next year will mark the 100th anniversary of his birth. There will, of course, be world-wide observances of this momentous occasion. This will be the occasion, too, for greatly increasing the study of Lenin's works—for advancing the theory and the cause of Marxism-Leninism. The recent World Conference of Communist and Workers Parties adopted a special resolution calling for such a celebration.

In many places observance of the Lenin centenary has already begun. In this issue of *Political Affairs* we open it with the presentation of an article by Joseph North dealing with impressions of those—and particularly Americans—who knew Lenin. We shall follow this with other articles on Lenin in the coming months, leading up to the full-scale celebration of the centenary in 1970.

## The 19th Convention: A Turning Point

As time passes, it will become increasingly evident just how important a turning point the 19th Convention of the CPUSA has been. It was preceded by an exceptionally intense period of review of policies, work, experiences and leadership. The pages of *Political Affairs* and of the eleven discussion issues of *Party Affairs* published in the four month pre-convention discussion period are filled with articles examining the policies of the Communist Party in relation to the problems facing the working class and people of our country.

The 19th Convention will be recorded in U.S. working-class annals as of special significance on several counts. It will be noted as:

1. The Convention that succeeded in restoring fully, in practice, the orientation of the entire Party toward the working class, black and white, and particularly toward its basic industrial core.
2. The Convention that put the mass fight against racism and for the rights of the black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Indian peoples on a new level and sharpened the struggle of the Party against the alien influences of chauvinism within its ranks.
3. The Convention that adopted a basic party program outlining the path of struggle to achieve a socialist United States.
4. The Convention that achieved a great advance in Party unity, based on a rejection of strong opportunist pressures from Right and "Left" on questions of ideology and on strategic and tactical lines of policy.
5. The Convention that created the basis for an all-sided breakthrough in building the Party and the Marxist press with respect to mass influence, size of membership and Communist standards of work.

From beginning to end the Convention was marked by great enthusiasm reaching many high points. Reflected in the enthusiasm was an intense feeling that the sharply rising struggles of our class and people require the special contributions of the Communist Party, and that our Party would be able to meet the challenge. It reflected confidence that the Party was already beginning to play a bigger role among decisive sectors of workers and would do so much more following the Convention.

Among the high points were the expressions of international

solidarity with our Party, especially the greetings from the fraternal delegates of the Puerto Rican and Canadian Communist Parties, the only ones who were able to get into the country. The Convention received the messages of greeting from the Vietnamese, Korean and Soviet parties with special warmth and enthusiasm. Greetings also came from the fraternal parties of Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Uruguay, Chile, India, France and many others. Such expressions of solidarity strengthened the Convention's resolve to fulfill much more completely our special responsibilities of proletarian internationalism as the party in the heartland of world imperialism, particularly our responsibilities toward Vietnam and Latin America.

#### *Vietnam and the Nixon Administration*

First priority was given by the Convention to the struggle to force the U.S. imperialists to get out of Vietnam now. Several specific tasks were indicated. Since President Nixon took office there has been some decline in demonstrative and other peace actions, hence new initiatives are required to stimulate peace activity. As outlined by the Convention, our responsibilities are to involve many more workers, to broaden the peace activity, which is much narrower in scope than the peace sentiment in the country, to deepen its anti-imperialist content and expand its anti-imperialist sector, to relate the struggle for peace much more closely to the struggle against racism and to the struggle to meet the economic and social needs of the masses.

The estimate made by the Convention of the Nixon Administration was that it is continuing in its policies the same direction as that of the Johnson Administration and has gone further on a number of questions. The Vietnam War policy is being continued, while the policies of monopoly give-aways, of anti-labor measures and curtailment of people's welfare, of actions against the interests of the black people, have been further developed. In addition, the policy of repression of popular movements in the ghetto, among students and peace advocates and of the struggles of labor is being stepped up.

#### *Industrial Concentration*

The main theme of the Convention, industrial concentration, was reflected in a number of ways. On several occasions the Convention

was brought to its feet by speeches of delegates who are shop workers as they dealt with their experiences, with the meaning of the Party for them and with the industrial concentration policy. When a black auto worker spoke, a young white steel worker, a black woman trade unionist, the Convention responded with great enthusiasm to these portrayals of the role of workers and trade unionists in our Party and to the evidence that our Party has a shop cadre not to be matched by any other political organization in the country.

The Draft Main Political Resolution, the main political report by Comrade Gus Hall and the report on building the party by Comrade Henry Winston all reflected the central theme of the Convention. Comrade Hall's report placed it this way:

This development [rank-and-file movements] is the key link in the class struggle. More, it is the key link in the struggle for social progress. . . . History will forget or overlook our missing buses, but it will never forget or forgive our missing *this bus* of the class struggle. We can be aboard—from the very first stop. Indeed in many areas, we already are. (*On Course: The Revolutionary Process*, New Outlook Publishers, New York 1969, p. 37-38.)

The greatest danger is to underestimate the process of radicalization among workers, Comrade Hall warned. In Comrade Winston's report the task was signaled in the following manner:

. . . The task of building our Party among decisive sections of the working class, the task of building our Party in such a way that one understands the need of the unity of the class on the basis of a fighting policy, beginning at the point of production. . . . To organize and anchor itself in the basic industries, with the working class as its pivot, a party must understand that it must also rally support to the fighting students, black and white. It must be a party which gives support to any and all social struggles in defense of the vital interests of our people. . . . And our party is a class organization, the highest form of class organization, which must help this class to feel its responsibility to itself and to the people in general. (*Build the Communist Party—the Party of the Working Class*, New Outlook Publishers, New York 1969, p. 9.)

And further:

. . . when people speak about where the action is, they are usually talking about the demonstrative actions, forgetting this

pivot, this working class base which the demonstrative actions need, just as the working class needs the demonstrative actions. But the lever for achieving a union of the two is to see the centrality of the working class. (p. 17.)

After examining economic developments and the economic policies of the Nixon Administration, especially the tax and budget policies, Comrade Hall analyzed the reasons for the process of radicalization among workers, explaining why this process will continue to broaden and deepen. The growth of multinational corporations and conglomerates, open use of the resources of the state for bigger profits, misuse of technological breakthroughs and thus creating job insecurity, speedup, deteriorating health conditions, growing attacks on labor, rising taxes and inflation. All these, serving maximum profits and imperialist policies, lay the basis for the process of radicalization. The influx of large numbers of young workers, black workers and women workers has also been a factor, as the main report notes.

Comrade Hall examined the growing bankruptcy of the top AFL-CIO leadership and then the rank-and-file movements which are developing, particularly the growth of black caucuses. The united front based on rank-and-file movements but not excluding unity with layers of trade union leadership, particularly certain lower and middle strata, was discussed, as was the basic character of the fight for trade union unity. The development of forms of expression of a Left, including its development on a national scale, was also discussed and especially around a program of combatting the effects of automation, fighting against imperialism and racism, and striving for political independence.

In terms of gearing the Party for these mass policies among the workers, Comrade Winston discussed the question of restructuring the leadership and its style of work so that less time would be spent in the work of leadership bodies at different levels and more time in working directly with the membership in the districts. He said:

Furthermore, the leadership must have an intimate, daily relationship with the districts, with priorities given to the concentration districts. It must be a relationship which guarantees that the specific concentration industries for the districts have been decided upon, that the work of the Party in respect to these industries is constantly reviewed and checked upon, and that every single member of our leading committees is responsible for a given industry. . . . (P. 11.)

Toward implementation of the approach introduced by Comrade Winston, the Convention adopted an Open Letter to the membership on the question of industrial concentration. After presenting the tasks facing our class, and the need for and general method of industrial concentration, the letter calls for the building of 50 new shop and industrial clubs by January 1, 1970 and the singling out of auto and aircraft, steel, transportation and electronics as the basic industries in which to build the Party, the circulation of the *Daily World* and other Marxist press. In further resolutions adopted by the Convention, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and Indiana were chosen as the Party districts for special attention on the basis of industrial concentration. Goals for recruitment of workers in these basic industries and in other industries were agreed to as were the goals of 1,000 additional papers in bundles and 200 new subscriptions by January 1 in concentration plants and industries. A national plan of industrial concentration is to be drawn up.

The Convention reflected the fact that we were already going beyond the stage of just talking about industrial concentration but had some experiences to reflect. Considerable improvement was registered at the Convention in the shop worker composition of both the Convention delegates and the National Committee that was elected.

### *Racism*

All the major reports and documents stressed the centrality of the fight on a mass scale against racism and against its reflections inside the Party. The Convention was itself a living experience in the struggle to raise our standards in this struggle.

The main political report stated:

For us the struggle against racism and chauvinism does not stop with moral indignation. For us it is related to and is a feature of the class struggle. . . . Racism is the most serious and formidable obstacle to class unity, to working-class consciousness and to socialist consciousness. We have to convince all who seek social progress that racism is the ideological obstacle to achieving it.

If we are not a more effective force against racism, it is because of the influence of white chauvinism in our own ranks. We can only be effective in convincing others of the centrality of the fight against racism to the degree to which we ourselves understand it. . . . Without such a struggle we cannot have a successful policy of industrial concentration, and we cannot build the Party.

. . . We have to accumulate a body of experience in the struggle against racism. White Communists must become experts in this struggle. (Pp. 61-62.)

In discussing this question, Comrade Winston in his report addressed himself particularly to white Communists and said:

. . . The struggle against racism in the United States is difficult. It is hard. But that's the essence of the fight to overthrow capitalism in the United States. Capitalism cannot be overthrown unless white workers understand their own class responsibility, their duty to defend the fundamental interests of black men and women. This poses as the primary task fighting among the whites within the white community to change conceptions and practices. . . .

When we speak of the beastly racist character of the police, and of stopping them, isn't it the primary task of white Communists to work in such a way as to prevent the outbreak of their beastly attacks? . . . Is it not a mass task among whites to curb and even to legally disarm the police? (Pp. 17-18.)

Comrade Hall discussed the growth of the racist danger around such candidates as that of George Wallace as well as the decline in activity in white church and other liberal circles, and the tasks of the Party in these areas.

As we noted, black caucuses in unions and the need sometimes for black unions as a path to trade union and class unity received much attention. The Convention adopted a series of resolutions submitted by the Convention panel on black liberation, dealing with the right of self-defense, the Black Panther Party, black-white unity, the South, and self-determination. The resolution on self-determination, indicates the three aspects of the question—the national, class and racial aspects. It indicates that the question of power has come to the fore in the black community and points to the various special demands for community control, etc., that the Communist Party fully supports. After concluding that black people do not now constitute a nation within the definition worked out by Lenin and Stalin, the resolution states that we unequivocally support the black people in their right to determine their own destiny, including institutional and territorial arrangements. The resolution expressed the possibility of the black people developing into a nation, in which case our support for their determination of their own destiny would express itself in the form of unqualified support for the right of self-determination.

Each of the major reports and documents dealt at length with mass developments and demands and with our tasks in the mass struggles.

The Convention also agreed to launch an educational campaign against white chauvinism, both among the masses and within the Party. Occasion arose at the Convention itself to fight to raise the level of sensitivity in several specific situations.

### *The Party Program*

After four years of work the Convention adopted the basic party program, charting the general path of struggle to a socialist U.S. The incoming leadership was instructed in preparing the final draft to sharpen the formulation of its general line in a number of ways. These include the upgrading of socialist agitation within the framework of democratic struggles, more emphasis on the leading role of the working class in the building of the anti-monopoly alliance, the role of the Party in this and as an organizing force leading struggles, etc. While we now have a basic program which resolves a number of fundamental questions that have been under discussion for several years, the Convention was aware that as a living document it would be subject to revision at each Convention in the same way as is the Constitution.

### *Party Unity*

The Convention was deeply concerned about the question of Party unity, and a higher level of unity was achieved than has existed for some years. This was evidenced in the fact that the basic documents and reports were all adopted with no more than 20 delegates out of 250 voting in opposition or abstaining. In the case of the main political report, no one voted against it and only a few abstained.

A number of significant questions under debate in the Party for some time were decided by the Convention. Some comrades had a more negative assessment of the world balance of forces and the main content of the epoch than that which our Party had made. On this point Comrade Hall's report, approved by the Convention, says:

What has irreversibly and fundamentally changed the world scene is the rise of the three currents making up the world revolu-

tionary process. The powerful world socialist system of states—in the first place, the Soviet Union—the world-wide national liberation movements—and the working-class movements in the capitalist world. . . . (P. 8.)

Comrade Hall acknowledged serious defeats in Ghana, Indonesia and elsewhere but then cited the defeats of U.S. imperialism with regard to Vietnam and Cuba as strong indicators of the new balance of forces and of the fact that U.S. imperialism could not simply have its own way. At the same time, he pointed to the increased aggressiveness and desperation evidenced by U.S. imperialism in many ways, including its launching of new ideological counter-offensives. He then said:

The question of how to assess the forces of the moment is not a matter of abstract interest. . . . A negative estimate leads to tactics of retreat. It becomes a weakness, especially when a negative assessment of world forces is combined with a negative estimate of mass trends, of the process of radicalization in our own country.

Negative tendencies not only lead to tactics of defeat; in many cases they are shields for policies of opportunistic accommodation to the difficulties and pressures exerted by the enemy. (P. 11.)

Comrade Hall then quoted from the draft document for the World Communist Conference which was itself subsequently approved by the Convention:

Socialism, the international working class and the national liberation movement continue their offensive despite the difficulties and setbacks encountered by some contingents of the revolutionary movement. Despite the counter-offensives launched by it, imperialism has failed to change the general balance of forces in its favor. . . . (P. 12.)

In the last several years, though to a lesser extent recently, a number of questions about the working class have been debated in the Party. There was a tendency by some to put large sections of workers and particularly of workers in basic industry in the category of "aristocrats of labor." There was also the view that wage demands were unimportant or even corrupting, while questions of management prerogatives were the only demands that could be considered "revolutionary." Some comrades oriented their policies and work on college students and other middle strata in the name of

"being where the action is," while failing to see anything new developing in the ranks of the workers. The Convention answered these questions in the major documents approved. The main report states:

For many years there were people who said, "We can't do anything now, so long as there are good times. Wait until there is an economic crisis, and then the workers will move." The sweeping theories of how "aristocratic" the basic working class has become, as well as the various "labor has been co-opted" schools of thought are cast in the same mold. . . . As we have seen, there are very serious economic crises, and the workers are moving—including those in the higher wage brackets. . . . (P. 24.)

Some ideologists on the "New Left" have now raised the question of the fight against management prerogatives as being "revolutionary" in nature, seeking to set this issue against other important demands of the workers, especially wage demands. . . . The Communist Party rejects such doctrines. Both the struggle for higher wages and the struggle against management prerogatives are struggles for reforms. Inherent in both struggles is the possibility of increasing the class consciousness and socialist consciousness of the working class, if Communists and other class-conscious workers are in these struggles and exert such influence. . . . (P. 48.)

Another point of major debate up to the eve of the Convention was the strategic line of the Party. Some argued that the concept of the anti-monopoly alliance was an obstacle to the struggle for socialism and was reformist. Usually there was also a challenge to the whole concept of struggle for democratic demands, rather than the "direct fight to develop anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist consciousness."

On this subject the main report states:

. . . the concept of the anti-monopoly movement and alliance emerges as a necessary consequence of the basic features of the monopoly stage of capitalism and especially of the dominance of state monopoly capitalism. . . . The rise of monopoly and state monopoly capitalism gives birth to a new contradiction—that between monopoly and the people—growing out of and superimposed on the basic class conflict. And this leads inevitably to the anti-monopoly character of all democratic struggles today, and hence to the concept of an anti-monopoly movement intertwined with, and providing the framework of, the struggle for working-

class political power—for socialism. (Pp. 84-85.)

. . . without our being in the very forefront of the democratic struggles against the monopolies, the fight for socialism inevitably degenerates into mere propagandizing and preaching, into the building of narrow, sterile sects. The placing of the democratic struggle as being in contradiction to the struggle for socialism can only lead in one direction—toward the bog of ultra-Leftism and Trotskyism. (P. 87.)

The substitution for the anti-monopoly concept of individual democratic struggles or the struggle against the military-industrial complex was also rejected as not containing a basic class analysis and orientation. The draft document for the World Communist Conference handled the anti-monopoly concept in much the same way as the documents of our Party.

In the area of electoral activity, prior to the Convention the Party's three-levelled approach was being challenged as meaningless. What was called for instead was to select one of the three levels as the most important and thus to solve the problems of an unclear line. Making independence within the two-party system the main level had its advocates, as did the proposition that the main level had to be independence outside the two-Party system. Both the main report and the panel report adopted by the Convention showed the unity of objective on all three levels. The former states: "The task of breaking out of the two-party system is not some objective for the future—it is a task to be worked on now. It is the inner theme of our electoral work on all levels." (P. 65.)

It states further: "The internal and external forms are levels of political independence—both move in the same direction. There should be no wall between them—it is this new force, emerging from the two levels of independent development, that will be the basis for a mass people's party." (P. 66.)

Speaking of new party formations that were small and narrow, the report rejected the idea that they were premature or that it was a mistake to help organize them. Rather the mistake lay "in thinking that in 1968 they could become the *only* form of political independence. Such one-sidedness occurred also in working within the Democratic Party with the idea that the McCarthy movement was the only form of independence." (P. 68.)

With respect to the third level expressed in the Communist presidential campaign, the report concludes: "With all its shortcomings,

it was an important campaign. It exposed some of the basic weaknesses in fighting for the Party and its independent role." (P. 70.) It concluded that such candidacies and activities must be expanded.

On the basis of these decisions a higher level of unity was achieved on basic questions of theory and policy. This also resulted from updating and making more tactically relevant our positions on assessment of the top labor leadership, trade union unity, black caucuses, self-determination and self-defense, the role of the working class in the anti-monopoly coalition, and other questions.

Throughout the Convention there was a strong expression of the desire of the delegates to put an end to certain factional tendencies that had existed, to stop debating endlessly the same propositions and to get on with the business of rooting the Party in the working class. A strong resolution against factionalism contained in the report of the Panel on the Party and Press was passed as were the constitutional amendments presented in Comrade Winston's report defining democratic centralism.

The following remarks by Comrade Winston were warmly greeted:

. . . democratic centralism is indivisible. It must apply to all policies, all decisions without exception. Some comrades who disagree with the Party's position on the events in Czechoslovakia have asked why we cannot demand unity on domestic questions but allow disagreement on international questions. These comrades fail to see the oneness of Party policy. They fail to see that it stems from one body of theory, one set of principles. Differences on international questions are therefore quickly reflected in differences on domestic questions. . . . Democratic centralism, if it is to be effective, is also inseparable from the constant practice of criticism and self-criticism. . . . (P. 26.)

Comrades, factionalism is a most destructive force. It is incompatible with membership in our Party. It must be rooted out of our ranks, firmly and without hesitation. (P. 25.)

### *Building the Party* ←

Determination to build the Party in a many-sided way and confidence in our ability to do so, was a major feature of the Convention. The spirit of the Convention and what it was based on has already been discussed. Concrete proposals were adopted to strengthen educational work and cadre training, to simplify organizational structure, to strengthen the public role and initiative of the Party and to recruit. A goal was set of 500 new members by January 1, primarily workers,



black and white, in basic industry. The fight for greater mass influence and for higher Communist standards was spelled out. This means the fight to assure that Communists working among the masses will bring to these struggles the special contributions of Communists, products of the Party collective, particularly with regard to class orientation and the fight against racism in their mass activity.

In discussing the importance of building the Marxist press, Comrade Winston gave examples from Pittsburgh and Chicago of the results that can be achieved in circulation and its importance for any meaningful concept of industrial concentration. He concluded by urging that "we give this paper every possible support. It must be built, it must be extended as a voice to win the mass movement for correct policies and to help build this Party." (P. 27.)

In gearing the Party to make an all-sided breakthrough it was necessary to examine the outlook of the 18th Convention on this score and what has occurred since. The Main Political Resolution and Comrade Winston's report both state that the policies of the 18th Convention and the period since then have been essentially correct, but the projection of doubling the membership by the 19th Convention has not come anywhere near being achieved, though there has been some small gains, especially among workers. Such a doubling was not achieved, despite the mass upsurge, Comrade Winston said, because "such goals were not realistic. And why weren't they realistic? The reason was an underestimation of the depth of the crisis in which our Party found itself at the time of the 18th Convention." (P. 5.)

Comrade Winston examined the various indices of Party organizational status at the time of the 18th Convention, pointing out that not until shortly before the 18th Convention had any of them shown any improvement. He went on to say:

What was it that had brought our Party to this state? It stemmed from two main facts. The first was the tremendous wave of anti-Communism within the country. Tremendous pressures were exerted from the Right and from the Left, pressures which served only one master and one aim — the ruling circles of our country which were hell-bent on curbing our role in relation to the masses. Secondly, it was also the result of the wreckage produced by revisionism which undertook to destroy the Party from within. (p. 6.)

The panel report on the Party adopted by the Convention indicated that in secondary features some Party policies since the 18th Convention had either run ahead or behind events and were not always

tactically relevant. It noted also that the lag in the fight for the public and independent role of the Party had contributed to the inability to overcome the gap in development between the mass movement and the status of the Party organization.

#### *A Productive Convention*

In addition to these major achievements, the high level of productivity can be seen in the steps forward on a number of other questions. The level of importance for our country of the Mexican-American national question was enhanced by the presentation of the panel and it received greater attention at this Convention than previously. Because of certain weaknesses and difficulties in the handling of the question that occurred at the Convention, not all that was hoped for was achieved. However, a series of eleven motions outlining concrete tasks to organize the work in this field was adopted. As the panel reporter recommended, the incoming National Committee will prepare an examination of the basic theoretical questions involved in determining the type of national question at issue and the strategic solutions which emerge.

The struggles of the Puerto Ricans and of the various Indian peoples also received greater attention and more developed resolutions were passed on these questions, indicating some of the current levels of struggle, immediate and strategic demands and the tasks of the Party.

With respect to youth, the resolution placed before the Party prior to the Convention was adopted. It outlined strategic objectives among youth as an application of the Party's general strategic line and the main features of a Marxist-Leninist youth organization that is to be built, starting from what now exists and presenting the next steps of implementation. Several amendments sharpening the general line were passed.

Greater attention was also given to the question of women's liberation. The focus of the panel report was on working-class women in industry and in the community, on their movements and their demands. The discussion focused on women and particularly on black women — in community movements on schools, housing and other issues, in the peace movement and other struggles. It dealt with ways of raising the level of the Party's work in this field and with reflections of male supremacist thinking in the mass movements and within the Party.

A number of special resolutions were passed. One dealt with the fight against repression of the people's movements, particularly

through the use of the McCarran Act. Another dealt with questions of anti-Semitism, black-Jewish unity and the influences of backward bourgeois nationalist ideology among the Jewish people. A third dealt with cultural work. There was a resolution greeting the course of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and reaffirming our Party's general position on the events in that country.

Alongside the outstanding achievements of the Convention there were a number of weaknesses. The Marxist press, especially the *Daily World*, but also the *People's World* and *Political Affairs*, received all too little attention. The fight for the Party and the questions of the Party as an organization were underplayed, despite the excellent lead given this subject in Comrade Winston's report. And though tremendous headway was made not all problems of Party unity were completely solved. Some theoretical aspects of the national question await further work. Some reflections of insensitivity and ruling class ideology with respect to white chauvinism and national chauvinism appeared at the Convention, though the struggle against them showed that the Party was serious about advancing this fight to new levels. And there were other weaknesses.

But the weaknesses are small compared to the accomplishments of what will be regarded as one of our outstanding conventions. The achievements with respect to industrial concentration, the struggle against racism, the adoption of a program, the establishment of a higher level of unity on principled grounds, the fight to build the Party — all these assure the correctness of that estimate.

The new National Committee met in open session with the rest of the Convention delegates present, once again expressing the unity and confidence of the Party. Giving the lie to the dire predictions of disunity in the capitalist press, it unanimously reelected Comrades Henry Winston and Gus Hall as Chairman and General Secretary respectively.

JOSEPH NORTH

## An American Reflects on Lenin

We are, all of us, prone to revere great men and that is good. Heroes are often the embodiments of our own best ambitions and ideals. When I was very young Spartacus was my inspiration: his challenge to imperial Rome in the Servile Wars, as the Empire historians called them, fired my imagination, 2,000 years later—the heart and mind of a blacksmith's son living in a grimy industrial town on the banks of the Delaware.

As a youth I travelled from my home town to stand reverently where my American ancestors had stood: George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. I revered Tom Paine, the proud and lonely Titan who wrote *The Rights of Man*. George Washington had his works read aloud to inspire his freezing men in the snows of Valley Forge when it seemed as though King George's rigorously trained and highly armed mercenaries would overwhelm the ragged colonial guerrillas.

Heroes nourished my spirit. It is good for the young to have heroes: they help them grow a head taller. We are now in a moment in America when the troubadours of the dominant class strive to lull the people into a sodden lethargy with the cult of the non-hero, Man akin to Beast. Our young grow to adulthood in a degraded official culture that projects an image of humanity as vulpine creatures all appetite and no heart, lusting for their own advantage even if it means robbing another of his life. Books appear which preach that man inherits, through his genes, the urge to own property and the will to kill. We are today in the full fury of such an asocial hurricane of works that have the clearly criminal intent of damping the fires of humanist ideals, of thwarting man's quest for liberation in this time when the capitalist lords of society see the handwriting on the walls.

Hence I passionately welcome, from every standpoint, the celebration of the 100th birthday of one of mankind's purest and titanic achievements—the life of V. I. Lenin.

I am now in the full middle years of my life, after a journey of considerable travail—since 1930—battling for the rights of mankind. I can say that Lenin is the single human being who made the greatest impact on my thought, my deeds, my being. I know multitudes feel

similarly throughout the world. I am not alone here, in the United States, the bastion of imperialism.

### *A Superlative Man*

Lenin. In my mind I see him clear and bright, the indomitable revolutionary who is, more than any other human being, responsible for the ten days that shook the world—and then, afterward, for launching the first workers' state in mankind's history on an unswervable course. I see him as a man who deliberately schooled himself to his role, a revolutionist in full control of every sinew of his being, his mind, his emotion, his discipline, eschewing that which might take a moment from his labors (the satisfaction of his love of music, his recreation of chess), fashioning every iota of existence nature gave him so that he could be the fittest possible instrument to help liberate mankind. Superlatives? A superlative man.

In this day when the Achilles Heel of certain great men is their ego—the cult of personality—I see in Lenin the supreme example of the opposite. Here is the prime instance of the selfless, the selfless genius totally dedicated to his people, to humanity. I cannot forget reading that he said the ultimate test of a true Communist is when the citizen of, say, Leningrad, will feel as keenly the sorrows of a child in Buenos Aires whom he will never meet, as he does of one in his own city.

It is key, to me, of Lenin's character, his purity. In large part it is key to me of the legacy he left to the Soviet people who continue in his image, in his name. I lived two years in revolutionary Cuba from 1961 to 1963 and daily I saw the enormous and decisive help the Soviet people gave their Cuban contemporaries half a world away—the ships loaded to the gunwales with machinery and foodstuffs, oil and tractors—evidencing their concern for the children, the people of Jose Marti whom the average Soviet citizen will never see, loving them as fellow human-beings who toil and fight heroically for the right to live and choose their way of life—socialism.

When I saw that—when I saw, with my own eyes, the Cuban people defend themselves at the Bay of Pigs, when the world lived through the October missile crisis, the imperialist brigands held at bay by Soviet aid, I saw the face of Lenin.

Lenin has had profound and explicit meaning to me as an American. It has been ennobling for me to encounter Americans who “took the hand of Lenin,” spoke with him, knew him, heard his voice, his words, saw him in his living room. Some of these were my intimate friends.

They include one man whose biography I wrote—Robert Minor, the brilliant artist and Communist leader—our revered Ella Reeve Bloor, her son Hal Ware who received public praise in *Pravda* from Lenin for his valuable pioneering contributions to rendering Soviet agriculture modern and mechanized. They spoke to me, personally, of Lenin, and I shall indicate what they said. Then, of course, my predecessor as editor of the Masses—John Reed—introduced me to Lenin in his epic *Ten Days That Shook the World*.

In one word: from all I got this image of a man of unparalleled intellectual and moral grandeur who comported himself with such modesty that one could mistake him for the man on the street, an anonymous workingman.

Here are fragments of their accounts, as they told them to me, of their experiences with Lenin.

### *Robert Minor Speaks of Lenin*

Robert Minor, first, who came to Moscow shortly after John Reed. He told me he was in the Hotel Metropole during a session of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet Congress in 1918. At a distance he watched a group of men around the rostrum—“the greatest men of their time,” Bob said. A companion jogged his elbow, pointing out Lenin. “I saw a small, modest-looking man standing in a corner, drably dressed, a worker's cap aslant on his head.” Could this really be he? Lenin resembled his photographs, only he was so much less important looking than all the rest around him. For some minutes Minor continued to scrutinize the company of these revolutionary giants. But his eyes kept turning to the obscure man in the corner who seemed to him “the prototype of all the world's ordinary men.” He noticed the peculiar play of Lenin's features as he spoke and as he listened, his head cocked, a good listener, obviously. “Gradually Lenin became the visual center of the room and of the gathering,” Minor wrote in his notebook that night. “Everything else faded into its place and proportion.”

Minor told me of his interview with Lenin that next night, one of a dozen he was to have before he left the Soviet Union. “Lenin spoke little but got me to talk much.” Lenin was tireless in his questioning: he sought out every detail of the response within the working class of the United States, the attitude of the trade unions toward the Bolshevik Revolution. Minor told Lenin that the advanced members of the AFL enormously appreciated the workers and sailors of Petrograd who had saved Tom Mooney's life by their demonstration that

induced President Wilson to intervene in the case. It was this, really, that caused the Governor of California to commute Mooney's death sentence. The American said he was "herewith conveying the official thanks of the trade unions that constituted the Mooney defense committee," conveying it to him, the head of the Soviet state. Lenin's eyes "glistened" but he was silent.

Later, after they had finished their talk, and as Minor drew his overcoat on to leave, he upset some books on a bookcase and they toppled to the floor. "Lenin bent down and began picking them up, without halting his conversation." This unassuming act lingered in Minor's memory, he said, an insight into the character of Lenin, his utter simplicity, "this greatest single force shaping the world in the greatest moment of history." "Absent in Lenin was the faintest trace of pose, of airs, of pomp." He was as plain as bread, peace, land.

As plain as bread, peace, land.

Always there is that refrain: the modesty of this giant, his simplicity, his identification with the ordinary man, this genius who is, for me and for many, the greatest of all the world's great men.

### *Mother Bloor and Her Son Hal*

Ella Reeve Bloor's testimony was similar. The great-hearted Communist leader that she was, said she first met Lenin in 1921 during the Third World Congress of the Communist International, inside the Kremlin walls.

A small man entered very quietly from a side door near the platform and sat down at a table behind a large group of palms and immediately began making notes. "Lenin is here, Lenin is here," the whisper began spreading. Finally the delegates from the world over could restrain themselves no longer and rose and sang the *Internationale* in every language at once. Lenin, bent over his papers, paid no attention. When he rose to speak, they began to sing again. He waited till they finished, looking thoughtfully over the audience, then back at his notes, a little impatient to begin, and then started speaking directly and simply, without oratorical tricks or flourishes. There flowed from him a sense of compelling power, and of the most complete sincerity and selflessness I have ever seen. (*We Are Many*, International Publishers, p. 174.)

Again selflessness, again sincerity, all adding up to "compelling power."

Lenin's "compelling power" was clearly contagious, inspiring people

a world away, in lands with other traditions, other national experiences. Yet his ideas and his example evoked emulation to the maximum degree of power one possessed. Mother Bloor's son, Hal Ware, a man of remarkable quality, as agrarian expert, as organizer, as pioneer, mastered the area of mechanized farming in America in order to contribute this knowledge to Lenin's program for the countryside. He did so at Lenin's prodding. "Are there no farmers in America?" Lenin had asked urgently. Space does not permit the recital of how this American journeyed into every cranny of his native countryside to learn and to examine how the mechanization of the American farm had proceeded. He built on what he learned, and in 1921 he brought a group of about a dozen American farmers from North Dakota, tractors and seed, to the Soviet countryside near Perm. Twenty carloads of the latest type American farm machinery, a big supply of Canadian rye seed, tents and equipment for his men. Within weeks they had taught forty young Soviet peasants to drive tractors on seven-hour shifts, while the American workers taught and supervised for fourteen hours a day. Farmers came from miles around, scorning the priests who said the tractors were the work of Satan, and begged that the tractors be sent to help them plow their land. Kolchak's armies, (Mother Bloor wrote in her autobiography, *We Are Many*) and the famine, had swept the region clean of horses.

Lenin sent his own investigator to the farm to make certain he got the most accurate of reports. The latter reported that these Americans were engaged in pioneering work that fit exactly into the Bolshevik program of transforming the primitive, individualistic and unproductive farming of the past into modern, collectivized agriculture. And if you will look up *Pravda*, of October 24, 1922, you will find a letter of Lenin to Hal Ware about his work, in which Lenin said in part:

. . . You have accomplished successes which must be recognized as quite exceptional . . . I hasten to express my deep appreciation, with the request to publish it in the organ of your society and if possible in the general press of the United States of America . . . I again express to you deep thanks in the name of our republic and request you to keep in mind that not a single kind of help has been for us so timely and important as the help shown by you. (*Ibid.*, p. 272.)

Hal Ware continued his trail-blazing work in the USSR for ten years, doing what he could to bring industrial knowhow to Soviet farming.

But he was not alone, by far, of those Americans who were inspired by the Soviet Union and Lenin's leadership in it.

### *The Scientist Steinmetz and Lenin*

On one of his trips to the United States in those years Ware brought a message from Lenin to one of the time's great scientific figures, the electrical engineer, Charles Proteus Steinmetz. He was known as the "wizard of electricity" and he wrote Lenin on February 16, 1922, of his profound interest in the USSR. He offered to help with information and advice. As a life-long socialist Steinmetz thrilled to the birth of the new socialist order, Ella Reeve Bloor said in her autobiography. As scientist he admired Lenin who opened up such vistas in his audacious and epochal electrification program. Lenin answered Steinmetz at once (*Ibid.*, 274)

Dear Mr. Steinmetz:

I heartily thank you for your friendly letter of February 16, 1922 . . . I see that you have been led to your sympathy with the USSR on the one hand through your social and political views. And on the other hand you, as a representative of electrical science in one of the most technically advanced countries of the world, have become convinced of the necessity and inevitability of replacing capitalism by a new social system which would establish planned regulation of the national economy and guarantee the well-being of the mass of the people on the basis of electrification in all countries. In all countries of the world there is growing—more slowly than might be desired, but irresistibly and steadily—the number of representatives of science, technique and art, who are convinced of the necessity of replacing capitalism by a different social and economic system, and who are not repelled or frightened by the "terrible difficulties" of the struggle of Soviet Russia against the whole capitalist world, but who rather are led by those difficulties to an understanding of the inevitability of the struggle and of the necessity of doing everything in their power to help the new to prevail over the old.

I wish especially to thank you for your offer to help Russia with information and advice. Since the absence of official and legally established relations between the Soviet Union and the United States greatly complicated both for us and for you the practical realization of your proposal, I am taking the liberty of publishing both your letter and my answer in the hope that thus many people living in America or in countries connected by trade

treaties both with the United States and with Russia will assist you (with information, translations from Russian into English, etc.) to carry out your intention of helping the Soviet Republic.

With warmest greetings,  
Lenin

As Mother Bloor told me, and wrote in her autobiography, the letter failed to reach Steinmetz until her son Hal Ware brought the original copy to the scientist late in 1922. Ware made a special trip to Schenectady, New York where the "wizard of electricity" had his offices at the main plant of the General Electric works, the biggest in the country. He was the chief consultant to the plant. Ware tried to deliver the letter and an autographed photo of Lenin, but Steinmetz's secretary met him at the door and said: "No one can see Dr. Steinmetz today. He is having a conference with all the vice-presidents."

Hal said in his quiet way: "Please take a note to Dr. Steinmetz—it is very important." Tearing a page from his notebook he wrote: "I have just come from Moscow, with a personal message from Lenin. I will wait until you are free."

In five seconds the door was flung open, and Steinmetz himself rushed out, his arms outflung, saying "Come in, come in, come in." He hustled Hal into his private office, ordering his startled private secretary over his shoulder, "Don't let anyone in." He bombarded Hal with questions about Lenin, about education, about science, about the electrification program, about the organization of industry, about agriculture. Time went on, and one by one the vice-presidents opened the door and peered in. "Get out of here!" Steinmetz growled at them, and went on asking questions and listening eagerly to what Hal told him. Finally he said:

"Young man, do you realize what Russia has been doing? In this short time they have developed a standardized, planned electrification program for the whole country. There's nothing like it anywhere. It's wonderful what they have done. I would give anything to go over there myself and work with them." Steinmetz wrote a letter to Lenin for Hal to bring back personally. The scientist intended to accept Lenin's invitation to come to Russia as a consultant. But lack of diplomatic relations between the USA and USSR prevented rapid completion of the arrangements and, tragically, Steinmetz died within a year. (*Ibid.*, 275-276.)

### *Great Strategist and Tactician*

These are a few of the Americans who personally had association

with Lenin, but they are the ones I personally knew and who related their experiences to me. All of them concurred in their estimate of the man Lenin as the most outstanding individual they had met in their lifetime, and agreed that he was perhaps the greatest man history had produced.

I should like to indicate, in some further detail, what Lenin, his ideas and his example, meant to me, their impact on this particular American. I dare say I am not unique.

When I became a part of the American working-class movement, I read a great deal of Marxist literature. We all did then. We were a generation of activists who worked hard all day and then, before turning in for our slumbers, we read "theory," as our Party expected of us. We were brought up on the injunction: "Practice without theory is blind; theory without practice is sterile." We were determined to be neither blind nor sterile. And so we read, voraciously. I believe I read every word in English by then of Lenin's translations.

I admired the spare, lucid, and very business-like style of Stalin's, and I still do, despite the revelations that he erred enormously in his latter years. But for me Lenin was master, the teacher, the father of his generation who led all others in political analysis, perception, and who was, at once, strategist and tactician, a rare combination.

One of the most magnificent achievements in history, I always felt, was his scientific accuracy in determining when power should be attempted, that fateful October of 1917. Underscored in my mind is his statement he sent to his colleagues when he was in hiding outside Petrograd.

I am writing these lines on the evening of the 24th. The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal.

With all my might I urge comrades to realize that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people. . . . We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets (defeating them, if they resist) and so on. . . . History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they will certainly be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything. (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 234-35.)

To me this is the arch-example of the mastery of tactics. It indicates, I feel, that the master ideologist was "political general" of the grand strategy and, simultaneously, a "field general" in the battles. It is a quality given to few great men I have studied, and reveals to me, the intimate knowledge of every major detail in life that was the essence of Lenin's power. Obviously, he knew the individual man as well as the mass of men (a quality lacking in Plekhanov, say, so far as my readings show). Lenin could assess the moment as well as analyze the long span of history; he was master of the concrete as well as the general. (How often I encountered in my readings of him that "the truth is always concrete!") How much greater as philosopher he was than, say, Hegel, who—with all his mighty gifts—"stood truth on its head."

Lenin's was a practical judgment, a determining judgment, one that would immediately affect history for all time, the decisions that would set hundreds of millions of men into motion. He did so, for example, in demanding the concrete date of November 7th as *the* moment for the take-over of power. He did so with colossal moral courage as well as physical (at great personal risk he made his way from hiding to the Smolny, despite the search squads everywhere out to capture him). Moral courage? He remained utterly steadfast to his conviction despite the strong opposition among his colleagues on the Central Committee, like Kamenev and Zinoviev (who had blabbed the plan for the action and whom Lenin called "strikebreakers"); there was the opposition of Trotsky, and even Stalin appeared to hold a conciliatory attitude toward the two men Lenin excoriated as "strikebreakers," whose expulsion he demanded from the Party despite his former close association with them.

Despite one and all, Lenin persisted, and his ideas prevailed. The Party plowed full speed ahead in its arduous, practical organization for the uprising.

History has triumphantly recorded the results: how, almost bloodlessly, the Bolsheviks captured power.

The destiny of mankind turned that morning of October 25 when the appeal Lenin wrote "To the Citizens of Russia" said:

The Provisional Government has been deposed. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies—the Revolutionary Military Committee, which heads the proletariat and the garrison. (*Ibid.*, p. 236.)

In my reckoning Lenin opened the greatest day in the history of

mankind with that announcement. Why? It inaugurated a new era in humanity's history, the transition from the Kingdom of Necessity to the Realm of Freedom, as Engels had put it. Pre-history had ended: history had begun.

This, to me, surpasses any specific act by any human being since history was recorded. And it is to the eternal glory of the Russian peoples, their Communist Party, and V. I. Lenin at its head—Lenin, guiding his Party and his people to the earth-shaking successes. This is the measure of the man, the culmination of his mastery of the social sciences, the apex of his wisdom and his courage, his unwavering adherence to principle. Superlatives again? Was there ever anything to match this superlative act of history?

### *Reed and Gorky Speak of Lenin*

I am proud that it was an American—John Reed—who described Lenin on November 8 at the second session of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets when the first declaration of the new state was a declaration calling for peace.

Reed writes, in *Ten Days That Shook the World*:

It was just 8:40 when a thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the presidium with Lenin—great Lenin—among them. A short, stocky figure, with a big head set down in his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide, generous mouth, and heavy chin, clean-shaven now, but already beginning to bristle with the well-known beard of his past and future. Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been.

A strange popular figure—a leader purely by virtue of intellect: colorless, humorless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncracies—but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analyzing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual capacity. (John Stuart, *The Education of John Reed*, International, p. 204.)

This is the unforgettable image of Lenin Reed has left with his myriads of readers. Yet I would expand that somewhat from my other readings, Krupskaya, Gorky, others. I would add my impression of the mighty patriotism he had for his Russian peoples, which was the seedbed out of which his profound internationalism flourished. One cannot be a true internationalist, it seems to me, without a consuming

love for one's own country. I remember Gorky in his recollections coming upon Lenin reading *War and Peace*. Lenin glowed over Tolstoy's genius. "What a Colossus, eh? What a marvelously developed brain. Here's an artist for you, sir. And do you know something still more interesting? You couldn't find a genuine muzhik in literature until this Count came upon the scene." (Maxim Gorky, *Days With Lenin*, International, p. 57.)

Then, Gorky writes, "screwing up his eyes, and looking at me, he asked, 'Can you put anyone in Europe beside him?' And replied to himself, 'No one.' And he rubbed his hands, laughing contentedly."

There is more from Gorky.

I more than once noticed this trait in him, this pride in Russian literature. Sometime this feature appeared to me strangely foreign to Lenin's nature, appeared even naive, but I learned to perceive in it the echo of his *deepseated, joyful love for his fatherland*. In Capri, while watching how the fisherman carefully disentangle the nets, torn and entangled by the sharks, he observed, "Our men work more quickly." When I cast some doubt on this remark, he said with a touch of vexation, "H'm, h'm. Don't you think you are forgetting Russia, living on this bump?" (*Ibid.*, p. 57.)

### *Lenin's Writings Cast Clarity on The Present*

As profoundly as he loved his own country, he loved all mankind (minus its enslavers to whom he gave no quarter). I remember his "Letter to the American Workers," which made so deep an impression upon me, when I first read it some twenty years ago. I thrilled to his description of our Revolutionary War and Civil War. "The history of modern, civilized America," he writes, "opened with one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars of which there have been so few compared with the vast number of wars of conquest which, like the present imperialist war, were caused by squabbles among kings, landowners or capitalists over the division of usurped lands or ill-gotten profits. That was the war the American people waged against the British robbers who oppressed America and held her in colonial slavery, in the same way as these 'civilized' blood-suckers are still oppressing and holding in colonial slavery hundreds of millions of people in India, Egypt, and all parts of the world." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 63.) He appraised the Civil War similarly, referring to "the immense, world-historic, progressive and revolutionary significance of the American Civil War of 1863-1865." (*Ibid.*, p. 69.)

How much he could teach in so brief a work! I learned much in that short, but enormously cogent statement, that held me close to reality in later years. I refer here to the moment of the Nazi-Soviet pact which evoked a great and acrimonious debate here upon its announcement, and resulted in casualties, in departures from the Marxist Left by individuals who became confused, were enveloped by gloom and consternation. And we are in a moment again when the ultra-Left as well as the Right are hammering their gongs of confusion. What Lenin wrote in his "Letter to American Workers" held me in good stead.

Lenin spoke of that moment after October 1917, while World War I was still raging, when the young socialist republic concluded an "agreement" with German imperialism. The Anglo-French and American imperialist vultures raised the roof with their cries. "Blackguards in the international-socialist movement . . . who grovelled to bourgeois morality" . . . joined the hullabaloo.

Lenin wrote:

. . . What hypocrites, what scoundrels they are to slander the workers' government while trembling because of the sympathy displayed toward us by workers of "their own" countries! But their hypocrisy will be exposed. They pretend not to see the difference between an agreement entered into by "socialists" with the bourgeoisie (their own or foreign) *against the workers*, against the working people, and an agreement entered into *for the protection* of the workers who have defeated their bourgeoisie, with the bourgeoisie of one national color *against the bourgeoisie* of another color in order that the proletariat may take advantage of the antagonisms between the different groups of the bourgeoisie. . . . There are agreements and agreements, there are *fagots et fagots* as the French say. (*Ibid.*, p. 66.)

Then he tells a most revealing episode, one that should never be forgotten in the maelstrom of developments in a world torn by contradictions.

When, in February 1918 the German imperialist vultures hurled their forces against unarmed, demobilized Russia, who had relied on the international solidarity of the proletariat before the world revolution had fully matured, I did not hesitate for a moment to enter into an "agreement" with the French monarchists. Captain Sadoul, a French army officer who, in words, sympathized with the Bolsheviks, but was in deeds a loyal and faithful servant of French

imperialism, brought the French officer de Lubersac to see me. "I am a monarchist. My only aim is to secure the defeat of Germany," de Lubersac declared to me. "That goes without saying (*cela va sans dire*)," I replied. But this did not in the least prevent me from entering into an "agreement" with de Lubersac concerning certain services that French army officers, experts in explosives, were ready to render us by blowing up railway lines in order to hinder the German invasion. This is an example of an "agreement" of which every class-conscious worker will approve, an agreement in the interests of socialism. The French monarchist and I shook hands, although we knew that each of us would willingly hang his "partner." But for a time our interests coincided. Against the advancing rapacious Germans, *we*, in the interests of the Russian and the world socialist revolution, utilized the equally rapacious counter-interests of *other* imperialists. In this way we served the interests of the working class of Russia and of other countries, we strengthened the proletariat and weakened the bourgeoisie of the whole world, we resorted to the method, most legitimate and essential in *every* war of maneuver, strategem, retreat, in anticipation when the rapidly maturing proletarian revolution in a number of advanced countries *completely* matured. (*Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.)

And he said he would "not hesitate one second" to enter into a *similar* "agreement" with the German imperialist vultures if an attack upon Russia by Anglo-French troops calls for it.

How could one forget this historic experience when confronted with the reality of the Nazi-Soviet Pact I certainly knew how the bourgeois democracies were dragging their feet in getting to Moscow those weeks prior to the Pact. As an editor with some knowledgeable access to facts, I knew the strong, clandestine, and not so clandestine, efforts of central circles among the imperialists to switch the war into the "drang nach Osten," to keep it a "phony war" so long as it was between imperialists, but to make it a 100 per cent, a real war if the Germans could be induced to attack the Soviet Union. Who could underestimate the Chamberlain current, the Laval influence, the Nazi-appeasing Cliveden Set. And so, when the USSR found it necessary to take an action, to me not dissimilar from the one Lenin took in February 1918—to split the imperialist front—why not? How could one in all justice oppose that course? I could not.

#### *Lenin on Differences in Capitalist Camp*

Of course, this episode, which Lenin cites in his "Letter to American Workers" was not isolated. I read in the past, and recently



again in *New Times* (No. 7, February 19, 1969, pp. 10-11), about the hard-fought diplomatic battles of the Genoa conference in 1922. Lenin wrote Chicherin and Krassin, the Soviet delegates "not to be frightened now with isolation and blockade, nor yet with intervention." Lenin told the Soviet representatives to draw a clear distinction between the peaceable, sober-minded section of the bourgeois camp and the aggressive wing. And to work in such a way as to "strengthen the pacifist wing of the bourgeoisie and increase even slightly its chances of election victory, and, secondly, to disunite the bourgeois countries united at Genoa against us—that is our two-fold political task at Genoa. Most certainly not to propound Communist views." That was not the place to convince others of Marxism's worth, for, as he said, they came there as "merchants," seeking trade agreements and terms for a peaceful coexistence.

Lenin sought as a basis of Soviet foreign policy "to split the pacifist camp of the international bourgeoisie from the brutal-bourgeois, aggressive-bourgeois, reactionary-bourgeois camp." (How close this latter description is to the definition of Nazi fascism a decade later!)

But the Entente Powers continued to use the weapon of blackmail, refusing to make restitution for the damage and the loss caused Soviet Russia by the military intervention and blockade, demanding payment of all the debts of the Czarist and Provisional Governments and the return of nationalized property to foreign ex-owners.

Lenin instructed Chicherin, "Break off at all events and without delay. . . ."

He had other trump cards up his sleeve. When the Genoa conference opened April 10, there was a united anti-Soviet front of all the capitalist powers. Six days later, that united front lay shattered for the world to see. The historic treaty of Rapallo was signed with capitalist Germany which then dropped out of the anti-Soviet bloc. Under the treaty both sides renounced mutual claims that rose out of the world war, Germany renounced the demand for the return of nationalized Soviet enterprises to German ex-owners, provided the Soviet government did not meet similar claims by other states. Diplomatic relations were immediately established between the two countries.

It was a body blow to the capitalist world.

Now, having read accounts like this, having seen the effectiveness of Lenin's policy for peaceful coexistence, breaking through the united cordon of the enemy, I felt I could understand the Nazi-Soviet pact. I wrote in that light, but certain editorial collaborators, like Granville Hicks, and others broke with us.

\* \* \*

These are but a few of the facts I recount to indicate Lenin's impact on me. On me, as on so many others. I cannot forget, for example, the illustration my friend John Cookson afforded in this regard. A heroic volunteer in the International Brigades to Spain, he told me with a smile one night on the battlefield near Madrid that Lenin had "recruited" him to go fight Franco. Here was his story. He was studying physics at the University of Wisconsin but, like so many others in America, he was no partisan of socialism nor did he look upon the Soviet Union with a friendly eye. The name of Lenin was anathema.

One day while studying epistemology, he encountered the name, V. I. Lenin, in the index. "What the devil did the Bolshevik villain have to do with this subject? To me he had horns and a cloven hoof. I was consumed with curiosity. I took the book out—*Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*—and began reading it as soon as I reached my dormitory. I read all night long and into the daylight, finishing it at one sitting. I was entranced, and besieged the library and thereafter a Left-wing bookstore for everything of Lenin's."

When he was through with his self-assigned course in study, the war in Spain was on. Cookson sought out the proper people, and enlisted to fight in Spain. (He was one of the 1,500 Americans who never returned.)

How many more Americans were there like us? Who can count them all? Where is the proper census-taker? But I will venture that their ranks—ours—are of sufficient number to make a difference which way history will move. For, as I said at the outset of this brief set of reflections, to read Lenin, to know Lenin, is to stand a head taller. Somehow the word "invincible" pushes its way to the forefront.

## A Significant Labor Conference

The first conference of the Alliance for Labor Action (A.L.A.), held in Washington, D. C. on May 27-28, was an historic occasion. It can mark the beginning of a rapid growth of the ranks of organized labor and a major shift in the role the trade union movement plays in the political life of the country.

The conference was in no sense a convention. While guests and observers from a number of unions were present, it was strictly a Teamsters-U.A.W. affair. About 500 selected delegates, evenly divided between the two unions were in attendance, with executive board members of both unions occupying the platform.

Frank Fitzsimmons, acting president of the Teamsters, and U.A.W. head Walter Reuther, insisted in their opening remarks that the A.L.A. should not be considered in competition with the AFL-CIO or its affiliated unions, but concerned solely with unifying and revitalizing the whole labor movement. It was made clear, however, that once the conference adopted a constitution, all other unions wishing to participate in the A.L.A. program, were welcome.

### *Speaks Out Against Vietnam War and ABM*

In spite of these affirmations, positions taken at the conference immediately brought the A.L.A. into conflict with major policies of the AFL-CIO. Most dramatic was the strong opposition to the war in Vietnam introduced by Fitzsimmons, supported by Reuther, developed by Senators George McGovern and Charles Percy, and resoundingly applauded by the delegates. High level military spending was sharply condemned in a resolution opposing the anti-missile ballistic system (ABM). This resolution, passed with one lonely "no" vote, made the following demands.

It called on the President to initiate arms-limitations negotiations with the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France, to enter into a mutual moratorium on testing and deployment of all offensive and defensive strategic weapons with the Soviet Union and other nations, to use the billions saved for the critical needs of the population—for education, health care, housing, anti-pollution, traffic congestion, and "broad environmental problems and conservation of resources," to plan reconversion in such a way as to guarantee that workers

now engaged in military production will not suffer in the process. The resolution also expressed the hope that People's China would ultimately be brought into an overall universal arms control program "essential to the survival of the human family."

The important Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace had earlier expressed opposition to the Vietnam war and its effects on the living standards of labor's rank and file. Unions like the United Electrical Workers and the West Coast Longshoreman have consistently expressed principled opposition. But this was the first time, labor organizations of major proportions openly clashed with important policies of U.S. imperialism. As one speaker placed the question, "It's about time labor stopped giving the White House a blank check on foreign policy."

The AFL-CIO Executive Council has been among the most ardent supporters of the Vietnam war, and only a few days before the conference, it endorsed the proposed ABM system.

### *Resolutions Outline Effective Program*

In addition to a constitution, the conference adopted seven other resolutions, directed to a number of basic questions of intense concern to the American people.

The resolutions were developed in the conference with detailed and documented presentations prepared in advance by executive board members from each union. Along with a "Statement of Purpose," they indicate a program that can be developed into a grass-roots struggle for basic reforms certain to generate sharp clashes with the giant monopolies which dominate the American economy. Here they are in brief summary:

1. The resolution on "Organizing the Unorganized" established a permanent A.L.A. Organizing Committee to plan organizing drives by city, area and industry and for which manpower and funds would be committed. Its stated task is "organizing the millions of unorganized workers."

Discussion on this resolution gave great emphasis to the organization of the South. The president of the local union in the U.A.W. amalgamated parts plants stated that low southern wages were responsible for the fact that 51 parts plants covered by his local had either closed or moved South in the last ten years. The resolution called special attention to the plight of farm and migratory workers, as the most cruelly exploited workers in the nation. It also stressed the need to organize white collar and technical workers, as well

as the "working poor."

A restructuring of labor organizations and collective bargaining procedures were called for to meet the "revolutionary pace with which technology alters the methods and means of production, transportation and distribution and the rapid growth in the size and number of multi-industry corporations (conglomerates) in the national economy."

The citing of one sentence will indicate what a sharp break this conference is from the old posture of the trade unions. It reads as follows: "The unorganized workers need the labor movement and the labor movement needs the added strength the unorganized workers will provide so that labor can make its maximum contribution, *not only at the bargaining table, but, of equal importance, in the broad areas of national life where economic and social problems must be solved and national responsibilities be met.*" Such an approach goes beyond revitalization. It indicates a new stage of development in the American labor movement.

2. The resolution on "Health Care" declared that the A.L.A. would work vigorously for a National Health Insurance Act. It greeted the formation of the Committee for National Health Insurance and pledged its support. This committee is headed by Walter Reuther and includes a number of prominent clergymen and laymen. A number of reforms were proposed that would act as stop-gap measures until the Act becomes a reality. Many of them were directed to strengthening Medicare and Medicaid.

3. The "Tax Reform" resolution attacked the present tax system as unfair and inequitable, placing a disproportionate share of taxes on "low, moderate and middle-income families while permitting wealthy individuals and corporations to escape their just share of the tax burden." To make the point, it was reported that 12,000 individuals with incomes over \$50,000, 367 with incomes over \$100,000 and 18 with yearly incomes of over one million dollars, paid no federal taxes in 1966.

Tax reforms, based on ability to pay, were proposed. Included were exemption of workers' earnings below the poverty level and the plugging of known loopholes that benefit wealthy individuals and corporations. The A.L.A. hedged on outright opposition to the extension of the 10 per cent war surtax, tying it to "basic tax reform." Actually, the U.A.W. is leading a mass campaign against its extension in many parts of the country.

The A.L.A. suggested joining with others in forming a National Committee for Tax Justice. If this develops, it would help to take

the play away from the ultra-Right groups who are trying to direct the widespread anger at high taxes toward the elimination of funds for vital social needs.

4. Calling for a ten-year goal of 25 million new housing units, the resolution on "America's Housing Crisis" stated there are eleven million substandard and overcrowded housing units in the U.S., stating this as a very conservative estimate. It described the "state of the cities" as the "shame of the nation," which "more and more consist of spreading ghettos that are enclosures of poverty and racial discrimination."

Major blame was placed on the "scandalous speculation in land," the steep interest rates charged by banks, antiquated and restrictive building codes which prevent mass-produced homes, and failure of the federal government to allocate adequate funds for public housing. Several speakers castigated the building trades unions for collusion with the contractors on obsolete building codes, and their discrimination against black building trades workers and members of other minorities. The point was made that 90 per cent of U.S. homes are built with non-union labor. This in itself is a criticism of both the restrictive admission practices of the building trades and the deals made with contractors over the years at the expense of the majority of workers in the industry.

As on other social questions, the A.L.A. pledged to cooperate with national organizations working for reform—in this case, the National Housing Partnership and National Urban Coalition.

5. The potential for a structural breakthrough in trade union concepts by the A.L.A. is again demonstrated in the following excerpts from the resolution on "Community Unions." The resolution says:

In addition to helping the poor through seeking appropriate legislation, we have the responsibility of helping them by commitment and know-how, and our direct involvement with the poor in dealing with the many problems of their communities.

We need to work with the people in the center cities to devise new organizational structures which can respond promptly to the needs of the neglected neighborhood. *The present structures of our unions are not adequate. . . .* Our unions are organized to deal with the wages, working conditions and related problems of our members in connection with their jobs. Organization on the job is not the proper instrument to negotiate directly with public officials about the breakdown of public services in poor neighborhoods, for example, or with slum landlords about ex-

horbitant rents and horrible living conditions, or to attack the core problem of poverty besetting an entire community.

We need new structures which can be developed within a community itself, by those who live in the community. We need structures that flow from and are part of the community and not imposed upon it from the outside.

A pretty strong plug for community control

6. The resolution, "America's Unmet Needs and the Urban Crisis," was an omnibus document dealing with questions ranging from equal opportunity through education, jobs, inflation, consumer protection, pollution, pensions, reinsurance and similar issues. It ended by requesting an early appointment with President Nixon and appropriate members of his cabinet, as well as majority and minority leaders of both houses of Congress, "to discuss these urgent matters and to present the views of the A.L.A. concerning them."

7. The final resolution in support of the hospital workers' strike in Charleston, South Carolina, detailed the notoriously low wages not only of the hospital workers (\$1.30 per hour) but of the workers in South Carolina generally. This "right-to-work" state was described as a haven for runaway shops lured by the oppressive anti-labor climate. Its percentage of organized workers is the lowest of any of the 50 states.

A strike leader vividly portrayed the "slave conditions" in Charleston hospitals. She was presented a check for \$25,000 voted by the conference, on recommendation of the A.L.A. Executive Committee. John Birch textile magnates and political reactionaries like Congressman Mendel Rivers are leading the fight to smash this union. As this is being written, mass demonstrations are being organized in New York and other areas, to develop the kind of mass support for these heroic hospital workers that helped force the copper barons to reach agreement with the United Steel Workers.

#### *AFL-CIO Leadership Wars Against ALA*

As stated previously, the A.L.A. has gone to great pains to "assure the world that the A.L.A. is not a competitive organization." Frank Fitzsimmons protested against those who "proclaim today that the Teamsters and the U.A.W. are at war with the AFL-CIO."

Be that as it may, the AFL-CIO Executive Council is certainly at war with the A.L.A. Its affiliates have been warned that if they have anything to do with the A.L.A., they face expulsion. However,

the Chemical Workers and several other unions have indicated that they intend to set their own policies, regardless of the parent body. These unions have a great deal to gain in both bargaining strength and membership from the kind of organizing drive that only such powerful unions as the Teamsters and the U.A.W. can help them to undertake. As individual unions, they do not have the resources to smash the reactionary walls that have been erected against them, particularly in the South.

There is a remarkable parallel with the situation in the early 30's which saw the emergence of the CIO. The starvation wages and dreadful conditions existing in the basic industries had created a massive wave of discontent among the workers. The AFL insisted these workers had to be organized craft by craft (with dozens of crafts in most industries). In spite of the fact that it was impossible to organize such industries as steel and auto in this manner, for the AFL leadership it had to be craft unions or nothing.

At the same time, the few industrial unions that did exist, such as the United Mine Workers, saw their membership dwindling down to nothing, and realized that without steel, auto, rubber and other basic industries organized into industrial unions, they would go under themselves.

Actually to save themselves, John L. Lewis together with a number of other labor leaders went ahead and set up a Committee for Industrial Organization within the framework of the AFL. The immediate reaction of the AFL leadership was to brand the Committee a dual union and expel its members.

Of course, there are important differences between then and now. The issue in the 30's was industrial unionism. Today the issues are more complex. However, as in those days, the organization of the tens of millions of unorganized workers is imperative for a revitalized labor movement that can stand up to the giant monopolies which are further consolidating their strength in an unparalleled wave of mergers. There is the need for modernization and restructuring of the unions, to challenge effectively company prerogatives in the use of automation and other technological developments, as well as to be able to deal with the huge corporate conglomerates.

#### *New Problems Require New Approaches*

Today's labor movement has to be retooled in order to deal with the problems of the workers in their communities as well as at the point of production. It will have to break with supine sup-

port of the two-party system—particularly the entrenched machines—and reach a new level of political independence. And, of course, the Teamsters and the U.A.W. are not badly decimated bodies, but powerfully established unions with almost 4 million members and substantial treasuries.

The A.L.A. conference clashed with AFL-CIO policies on a number of questions in addition to the Vietnam war and the ABM system. One example was the positive attitude expressed toward the struggles of the college youth. It called for a "constructive and meaningful dialogue" with them. Einar Mohn, director of the West Coast Teamsters Conference, went further. He related the struggles of the students to earlier labor battles, and reminded the delegates of the times when "a scab crossing a picket line was a very poor hospital risk," and when auto plants were taken over and occupied by workers "in a certain city on the Detroit river." This is quite a contrast to Meany's demand to "keep them out of the plants," and the threat of Hutchinson of the Carpenters to "break a few heads."

The A.L.A. has not expressed a position towards relations with unions in other countries, especially the socialist countries. But the U.A.W. has successfully challenged the Meany-Lovestone-C.I.A. attempt to prevent contacts with unions in the socialist countries. Other unions are beginning to follow suit. Harry Bridges' Longshoremen never did break with the practice of international trade union fraternity.

It appears that the I.C.F.T.U. intends to capitulate to Meany's anti-Communist policies in international trade union relations. If so, that organization could very well collapse. The rapid internationalization of U.S. and other monopolies and their consolidation on an international scale, are bringing workers in many capitalist countries face to face with new and difficult problems. These workers are beginning to develop honest, friendly relations, regardless of varying political views, in order to deal with these problems. It is not likely they will permit the paranoid anti-Communism of a Meany to interfere with this process.

The A.L.A. resolution on housing surfaced sharp differences with the building trades in their collaboration with the building industry to block mass production and erection of low-cost housing. The pressure exerted in Detroit, and the formation of a black workers industrial union, are directly related to the decision of the Carpenters Union in that city to organize a building trades industrial union in the field of pre-fabricated housing.

### *Organizing the Unorganized*

Finally, on differences. While the A.L.A. emphasized that it wanted other unions to join it in organizing the unorganized and did not wish to get into jurisdictional disputes with existing organizations, Walter Reuther got a strong ovation when he declared: "We do not accept the proposition that any organization has the divine right to sit on its paper jurisdictional claims and thereby block the organization of millions of unorganized workers."

The A.L.A. can provide an effective alternative for unions under pressure to organize and advance in other directions. Unions fed up with the bankrupt policies of the AFL-CIO at home, its criminal support of the war in Vietnam, and its International Affairs Department which is no more than an arm of the C.I.A., now have a place to turn.

The transition of New York-based District 65 of the Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Workers into a national union is a good example. The failure of the parent body to initiate a national drive to organize distributive workers was making it harder for District 65 to win needed gains for its membership in the New York area. The international also rejected a request from District 65 to change the lily-white character of its leadership. Conditions were ripe for a militant union in the field of distribution. When the A.L.A. came forward, the pieces fell into place. Now there is a national union, the United Distributive Workers, with a black trade unionist, Cleveland Robinson, as its president, and the composition of its present 40,000 members reflected in an executive board whose majority is black and Puerto Rican. This union is committed to fight to raise the standards of hundreds of thousands of workers in this service industry, whose wages in most parts of the country are at or below poverty level, and a substantial percentage of whom are black, Puerto Rican and Chicanos. The Teamsters and the U.A.W. have made this possible by firm pledges of funds and organizers to assist in this undertaking. Here is a development that has been overdue for a long, long time.

### *Failure to Take On Racism*

A positive evaluation of developments around the A.L.A. to date must also take into account some negatives that will surely warp its progress until they are recognized and corrected.

The first is in relation to the question of racism.

The conference probed the effects of racism in greater detail and depth than any major union body in recent times. Resolutions and speakers dealt with low wages, poor housing, ineffective schools and other evils emanating from the discrimination of black workers and those of other minorities. Programs were developed to help combat these evils.

But the conference avoided an attack on racism itself—on the ruling-class ideology of white supremacy. While it wove the need for peace throughout its entire program in an excellent manner, the conference failed to identify the struggle for black liberation as a central issue of the day. In fact, several times, white and “black” racism were equated as equal dangers. The thinking that made possible the U.A.W. recent racist attack on militant black auto workers was revealed by Walter Reuther when he declared: “. . . we believe there are no white answers or no black answers. There are only American answers, which we must find together.” Here is a total inability to see the Negro question as a special question in our land.

There will be no advance by labor, until the fight against racism—against white supremacy—is taken up by the trade unions among the white workers. Until that is done, there is no guarantee that some reactionary demagogue, like George Wallace, might not succeed in splitting the working class, given the opportune moment. Without it, black and white working-class unity, vital for the organization of the South, cannot materialize. Militant black leaders in the ghettos who can be won to unity with the labor movement will have a lot of trouble overcoming understandable cynicism when they hear brothers in the plants described as “black fascists.”

### *Greater Reliance on Rank and File*

The rank and file of labor in the United States is throbbing with motion. It is organizing its own movements of struggle on every possible issue from speed-up on the job to back-breaking taxes. But with the exception of one or two speakers, there was an obvious reluctance on the part of the conference to tap this great source of strength and energy. I think an examination in depth of the rise of the A.L.A. will prove that it emerged from the growing struggles of rank-and-file movements, including the nationwide black caucus movement. Recognition of this, however, was demonstrated only in a negative way. It came in through the back door, so to speak. In an attack on the Landrum-Griffin Act, Frank Fitzsimmons actually equated the militant rank-and-file rejection of unsatisfactory con-

tracts with “rabble rousers and malcontents who use it [Landrum-Griffin] to disrupt union meetings where members discuss such important things as contract settlements.” Of course, many stooges have used the law to disrupt the Teamsters and other unions.

A threat: “If we don’t do something about it, we are going to have a hard time with our members,” ran through the discussions. Reuther’s pledge to “strengthen the structure and fabric of collective bargaining,” was the only reference to the widespread dissatisfaction with the weak and ineffective grievance procedures that permit a mountain of unsolved grievances on such vital questions as speed-up and safety to pile up year after year.

A drive to strengthen the shop-steward system in auto, steel and numerous other industries, is necessary to the success of the A.L.A. It will have little difficulty mobilizing workers in the mills and factories behind its program for the communities, when they see a militant fight on grievances at the point of production.

No speaker stooped to red-baiting during the entire conference, yet it marred the record in two areas. The Constitution adopted carries the same tired line of “Communist, fascist and military dictatorships that would enslave the human spirit.” The anti-ABM resolution has a sentence to the effect that “We have no illusions about the evils of Communism, either the Russian or Chinese versions.”

Here are built-in sleepers that reaction will use at every opportunity in their efforts to beat the A.L.A. into retreat. The deep penetration of anti-Communism into the American body politic during the worst days of the cold war is incorporated in what is a generally fine program.

Red-baiting has brought labor nothing; it never will. That is why it is becoming more and more in ill repute among the workers.

It is difficult to understand why the name of Teamster president James Hoffa did not come up in this gathering. Even among the least informed workers, it is generally understood that Hoffa was victimized because of the militant leadership he gave to the powerful Teamsters Union. It is a bad day in America when labor doesn’t come to the aid of her own.

### *The Role of the Left*

Recording these weaknesses is not a nit-picking expedition to achieve “balance.” They are serious defects that are harmful to the labor movement in general, and will hamper the work of the A.L.A. in particular. Discussing these defects takes nothing away from the

very positive developments in the A.L.A. and are no excuse for progressive workers to sit on the sidelines.

Militant labelling of A.L.A. leaders as "phonies" and its program as an "exercise in hot air" is a cover-up for doing nothing. The same applies to the shallow practice of putting all union leaders in the same bag, or the juvenile yearning for a "pure" trade union movement free of "compromise." This is of the same pattern as those who see rank-and-file movements only if they are anti-leadership and who reject the need for united front relations at all levels of the trade union structure.

Mistakes are most quickly exposed and corrected in the heat of struggle. Left and progressive workers have no reason to hesitate. The job now is to begin mobilizing the rank and file to place organized labor at the head of the fight for peace—to end the war in Vietnam; to launch a nationwide drive for the organization of the unorganized; to wipe out poverty in the ghettos; to organize mass political action for lower taxes, for a national health act, etc.

Rank-and-file pressure can bring many union leaders to identify with the program of the A.L.A. Whether they join it or not, this means a break with the policies of the present AFL-CIO leadership, so necessary not only to labor's revitalization, but for trade union unity on a higher level.

The A.L.A. has come on the scene as the ruling class decided to mount a wave of repression against democratic organizations. The Freedom Movement is a special target with frame-ups, police brutality and murder. Peace activists and student demonstrators are on the receiving end of brutal treatment. Efforts to smash the hospital strike in Charleston are a sample of what can happen to the struggles of the workers in the mines, mills and factories if the monopolies have their way.

A united front of labor—a Left-Center coalition—is what is required. Reaction can be stopped in its tracks today as it was stopped in the 30's. The founders of the A.L.A. are emerging as a Center. A Left is needed to complete the united front. The rebuilding of this Left in the labor movement is the most urgent task facing Communists and other progressives. This means first of all, rebuilding the Communist Party. *Participation* is the word—not *passivity*.

GUSTAV HUSAK

## Tasks Facing Czechoslovak Communists\*

The plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, held on April 17 of this year, dealt with the profound state of crisis in our Party, our society and in our international relations. It reached the conclusion that a change is necessary in our work; that it is necessary to speed up the search for a way out of this critical situation.

It was in this spirit that a new Presidium of the Central Committee was elected, charged with the task of submitting proposals to the next Central Committee on how it conceives the way out of the given unfavorable situation.

In the course of these six weeks until the present session, the Presidium discussed the situation in all spheres of inner-Party and inner-state affairs and adopted a number of specific measures to start the process of consolidation of the situation in the Party, in society and in our international relations.

### *Aims of Czechoslovak Party Today*

We are submitting today, for the consideration of the Central Committee, draft directives for the work of the Party, according to which our entire Party, all its organizations and members, should work for the consolidation of conditions in the country up to the convocation of the 14th Party Congress.

It is absolutely essential that we inform our entire Party membership, and the population generally, of the true state of affairs and how we envision the way out, what we want and do not want, so that every member and every citizen will have a clear idea of the Party's policy and thereby know how to orientate accordingly.

What are we trying to achieve?

1. We want to restore the unity of our Party on the essential foundations of Marxist-Leninist teachings, on the Leninist principles of the structure and life of the Party, on a political platform to be

\* We reprint herewith, slightly condensed, the first installment of the speech of Gustav Husak, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, delivered to the Central Committee, on May 29, 1969. Second installment will be in the August issue.

adopted by this Central Committee, thereby enhancing the activity and revolutionary militancy of the entire Party.

2. We want to restore the leading role of the Communist Party in our society, particularly in the mass organizations and in the various components of the National Front, in the state bodies and in the economic and cultural sectors.

3. We want to agree on a series of measures—or, at least prepare the ground for the working out of such measures—to solve the difficult economic problems we face.

4. We want to strengthen the function of the socialist state as the organ of power of the working class and working people.

5. We seek a fundamental solution of our relations with the fraternal Communist parties of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, on which the main principles of the foreign policy of our state are based.

The critical situation has affected all these decisive spheres and their solution is interconnected. Therefore, the various measures and decisions adopted by this meeting of the Central Committee must take into account a comprehensive view of these decisive problems.

#### *Elements of Crisis Arose in the Fifties*

We are not in a position today to submit to the Central Committee and the general public a scientifically, substantiated analysis of our development for the past several years. This will be dealt with by the 14th Party Congress and in the course of the preparations for that Congress. Nevertheless, we are obliged to provide the people with a basic explanation and orientation.

It is our opinion that the initial elements of crisis arose in our society in the fifties, when the Party leadership started to violate the Leninist principles guiding our Party and society, when sectarian and subjectivist viewpoints began to appear, when socialist legality was infringed and incorrect, or improperly considered, measures were applied in the economy.

These elements of crisis made their appearance after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. If the leadership of the Party at that time had dealt with these negative elements honestly and in a Leninist way, developments in our country would most likely have taken a different course. However, the partial and inconsistent solution of these negative phenomena preserved rather than removed them. Thus, gradually, contradictions increased in the political and economic spheres, in the minds of the Party members and the people.

The subjectivist approach of the Novotny leadership to these problems, and their accumulation over many years, worsened the situation in the Party and in the country and gradually led to a crisis situation. The sectarian and dogmatic approach of the Novotny leadership to the many theoretical and practical problems, his personal inclination to authoritarian solution of problems, the forced anticipation of developments which lacked an objective base, the failure to resolve many burning problems, the narrow practicalism and administrative methods of work, the neglect of political education and the unsatisfactory relations with the intellectuals—all these aroused opposition within the Party and among the people, reaching crisis proportions in the sixties. Therein lie the roots of the crisis phenomena.

#### *Absence of Firm Party Leadership*

The January turn in the policies of our Party was unavoidable and essential. Most Party members and the general public welcomed the changes which enabled them to eliminate the mistakes and deformations of the preceding years, to expand the scope of socialist democracy and to tackle the unsolved political, economic, national and other problems. Communists and other citizens were given full range for broad activity, for seeking a new approach and new solutions to the unsolved problems. The year of 1968 was full of hope for both Communists and non-Communists, a year of great expectations, of great opportunities to purge our practice and teachings of mistakes and distortions, to rectify the wrongs committed against the people and begin the settling of the accumulated problems.

Yet we know that crisis phenomena continued to grow during the past year and a half and gave rise to stormy upheavals in domestic and foreign political relations. . . .

We see the main cause for this critical situation in the fact that with the accumulation of unsolved problems, the process of regeneration and democratization was not clearly outlined and lacked the firm guidance of the Party. The Party allowed spontaneity to gain ground. While encouraging the positive activity of the people who were committed to socialism the door was left open for the penetration of anti-socialist and opportunist groups into the political life of the country. In this period these forces were able to seize hold of important political instruments for power as, for instance, to secure decisive influence in the press, radio and television, in some links of the Party and mass organizations.

When the Party leadership abolished censorship in February, 1968,



but failed to ensure its ideological leadership by other means, their influence on the mass communication media greatly contributed to the headlong onslaught by these opportunist and anti-socialist forces, the disorientation of a part of the Party membership, the spread of liberal, anti-Marxist, anti-Communist and anti-Soviet views and sentiments, exerting pressure on the Party, on government bodies and within society as a whole. The activity of all kinds of avowedly anti-socialist organizations, such as K-231 and KAN, was tolerated as was the attempt of the Right-wingers to restore social democracy and a new political formation of clericalism, etc. The Right-wing opportunist forces had their representatives in the local, middle and top Party bodies, in the government apparatus, in the organizations of the National Front and elsewhere. A sharp inner political struggle was waged for control of the Party, the mass organizations, various levers of state power and for positions in the economy.

Unfortunately, the leadership of our Party — the Central Committee and its executive bodies — were ideologically split and disunited in their actions. As a consequence, though essentially correct resolutions were adopted on some questions, the lack of unity in the leadership spread to practically the entire Party, hampered the implementation of decisions, weakened the Party's fighting ability and led to an open crisis. This situation in the Party found its reflection in the whole of society, all the more so as the anti-socialist and opportunist forces grew more active and aggressive.

#### *Anti-Socialist and Opportunist Forces*

The criticism of the mistakes of the fifties and of the Novotny regime were exaggerated by these anti-socialist and opportunist forces to such a degree that the entire activity of the Communist Party and of Communists, the Marxist-Leninist teachings and program, the very foundations of the socialist order, the principles of internationalism in relation to the Soviet Union and the other fraternal countries were all slandered and denigrated. The period of socialist construction, which brought such noteworthy results in the economy, in culture, in our social policy and in other sectors were described as the age of darkness. Tendencies arose for a return to the pre-February, 1948 days, the idealization of "Masaryk Democracy," and the like.

People often ask from where did the anti-socialist forces in our society come after 20 years of building socialism? It is true that as a result of the nationalization of the means of production the bour-

geoisie was deprived of its economic base as well as its legal possibility to conduct political activities. However, it is necessary to see, that the generation which up to nationalization controlled the main means of production is still living; that the former bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces have not disappeared from our society. Only since February, 1948 have they been unable to reveal themselves politically. A generation is still living which, for many years, was politically active in bourgeois and petty-bourgeois movements. To a certain degree the political and ideological ideas prevalent prior to February, 1948, remained in the Party.

These elements, supported by Western propaganda and Western influences, saw the possibility, after January, 1968, to change our socialist society, to reorganize socialism — to which they often gave lip service — in accordance with their ideas, thus changing the dominant political position of the working class and the working people, undermining the Communist Party as the main political force in our life and embarking our people on an adventurist road.

Various opportunist trends arose within the Party which exploited the criticism of the mistakes and deformations of the preceding period and under the slogan for a new "model of socialism" rejected the fundamental principles of the Party structure, the leading role of the Party in our society and its international character and obligations. These forces operated openly within all Party bodies right up to the very top. They exerted a decisive influence on the mass communication media and by manipulating the ideas of freedom, democracy and humanism, disoriented large numbers of honest Communists and honest citizens, caused confusion in the minds of the people, leading to a weakening of all the basic ideas of a socialist society. They formed a wing inside the Party which secured strong positions and actually drove for power in the Party and state.

This inner political development, which the Party leadership inadequately combatted, could not but arouse doubts, apprehensions and dissatisfaction not only among some Party members and citizens, but also among the fraternal Communist parties in the states with which we have bonds of alliance. The anti-Communist and anti-Soviet incitements, and the whole critical situation, seriously disrupted our international relations with the fraternal Workers' and Communist parties and states.

The stages of this development as well as the attempts to halt them are well known. They were cited at the Central Committee plenum in May of last year. Known to some extent are also the various negoti-

ations with representatives of the fraternal parties. The leadership of the Communist parties of the neighboring allied states gradually lost confidence in the ability of our Party to put a stop to these crisis phenomena. Within this context the well-known events of August, 1968, took place.

### *Disparity Between Words and Deeds*

We do not intend today to evaluate these events, their causes and consequences. We shall have to return to them and find a truthful, honest, Marxist evaluation of these developments. After the stormy upheavals of August, 1968, the Party leadership found a way out of this extremely difficult and complex situation in the Moscow protocol at the end of August. It seemed clear wherein lay our own mistakes in the post-January developments; it seemed clear that it was necessary to prevent the subversive activity of the anti-socialist and opportunist forces; that the state and social mass communication media must be brought under the ideological and political influence of the Party. This was stated repeatedly. But our words were not followed by deeds. Dissension in the Central Committee and in its executive bodies continued and were aggravated by the waves of nationalism and anti-Sovietism. . . .

The resolution adopted by the Central Committee last November outlined the positive aims of the Party and the ways in which they could be achieved. It unequivocally described the anti-socialist and opportunist forces in the Party as the main danger. There was ample opportunity for unifying all the sound forces in the Party and of society. Why then was there no consolidation on the basis of the November resolution? For the same reasons that existed prior to August. Our political life lacked firm leadership. The disunity in the Central Committee and its executive bodies, the violation of Leninist principles in the Party's activities, the waverings and lack of firmness in the leadership created vast scope for the activities of the anti-socialist and Right-opportunist forces in whose hands most of the mass media remained.

We know this situation was taken advantage of by the Rightist forces, by groups of fanatic university students. We know how on the wave of nationalist hysteria, the Rightist forces became rooted in a part of the revolutionary trade union movement, among the youth and other mass organizations and how they tried to seize control of all of them. . . . November and December of last year, and January of this year, revealed numerous subversive attempts on the part of

these elements that had repeatedly brought our state to the brink of catastrophe. Toward the end of March, these same forces launched a new onslaught. In some places their activities were unmistakably of a counter-revolutionary character and once again brought our society to the brink of catastrophe.

On April 17, the Central Committee of our Party decided to seek a way out of this situation. . . . Now after six weeks, we can say with confidence, that the majority in the Party and in our society has understood the meaning and approved the course outlined by the April plenum. It has become clear that together with us honest people seek an honest way out of this situation, show a responsible attitude to work and seriously want to tackle the problems of further socialist development. It has been established that most of our people are becoming convinced, on the strength of their daily experience, that such consolidation efforts are unavoidable. They do not want to go through perpetual storms, crises and upheavals. They demand an atmosphere in which quiet, creative work will be possible, in which human and socialist values will be restored and furthered, and in which guarantees will be established to implement democratically all future tasks. People insist on putting an end to the activities of those who sow chaos and anarchy and promote elements of social demoralization. . . .

### *Recent Measures and Their Results*

In the past few weeks the Party leadership has been trying, above all, to strengthen the Party's influence and prestige, to achieve the full restoration of public order, to eliminate all waverings in the actions of the Party and the government, to underline the consistently Marxist-Leninist character of our Party and its policies. It has been trying to isolate politically those forces which have caused tension in the past, brought anti-socialist views into our society and formulated platforms in opposition to the policies of the Party that were the source of the crisis situation within our country. These are the necessary first steps if we really want to lead our state out of the crisis.

The main results of our work for this short period can already be seen in the unquestionable change in the political atmosphere within the country. The healthy socialist and realist tendencies in the public's mind have been strengthened and opposition to manifestations of extremism and adventurism is growing. It has become clear that, deprived of the means of the mass media, the adventurist, anti-socialist forces do not enjoy much mass support. . . .

It was possible to achieve changes in the political atmosphere in

the past few weeks because we substantially strengthened the Party's leading role in the press, radio and television and substantially restricted the influence of the anti-socialist and Rightist forces. . . .

We have also taken the first steps to strengthen responsibility, discipline, order and the observance of socialist legality. . . .

Measures are being taken to eliminate shortcomings in the internal life of the Party, to strengthen democratic centralism and to increase the effectiveness of Party actions.

The Party leadership has begun to seriously discuss the problems of the economy and work has been started in this direction along Party and state lines.

We have made extensive efforts to normalize our relations with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. . . .

The measures which we have started to implement are an inseparable part of the political struggle in which we seek to win the trust and support of the overwhelming majority of our people. . . .

The basic question in overcoming the crisis situation in our society is the overcoming of the political crisis in the party. . . . What is the way of getting out of this situation? How can we restore the ideological unity of the Party, its ability to act in unison, its militancy? This can be accomplished by pursuing the tested Leninist road.

It is absolutely essential to make clear the main political tasks of our Party, to clearly state what sort of Party we really are and what we seek, reaching common agreement to conduct a political battle for the unification of the greatest possible number of Party members and consistently proceed from the Leninist principles of the work and life of the Party and its statutes. The experience of our Party in Slovakia shows that such a road can lead to success providing the Party leadership and all its bodies act firmly.

We have stated that the November resolution of the Central Committee is the basic document from which we now proceed. We are sometimes reproached that we do not speak, or speak only rarely, of the Action Program. . . .

How do we view the Action Program? The Action Program places correctly the overwhelming majority of questions, but it is necessary to elaborate them. After all, the November resolution took over substantial sections of the Action Program. However, the Action Program was worked out in haste under the influence of the crisis situation. It contains many vague formulations, allowing for a contradictory interpretation. Some formulations are incorrect. All this calls for further clarification and elaboration so that we can use the Action Program

as a binding document today. In the 14 months since the adoption of this program, our Party and our society have experienced many shocks and gained new experiences which cannot be ignored. That is why the November resolution and the later Party decisions meet the requirements and the situation more effectively.

### *No Return to Pre-January Days*

Some people reproach us that we seek to return to the pre-January deformations. The Central Committee, and the entire Party leadership, have more than once expressed clearly and unambiguously our determination to continue the post-January policies. Who is it then that is attempting to set up the bogey of a return to the period of the Novotny aberrations, to the subjectivist, bureaucratic methods of guidance of the Party and society? This bogey is being used primarily by those anti-socialist and opportunist forces who drove our society from one crisis to another, who abused the broad democratic freedoms — the freedoms of the press, speech and assembly — to divide our people, to disorient our Party members and the public, to spread confusion, to hound the Party and its functionaries, to whip up anti-Soviet sentiments. . . .

As to the doubts of honest people on whether or not we intend to return to the deformations, illegal actions and bureaucratic methods of the pre-January leadership, we would like to say again that we resolutely dissociate ourselves from all these negative phenomena of the past and seek a path for the Party and our country in keeping with the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, democratically and in conformity with the interests of a modern, advanced state.

In considering the political tasks of the Party we must revive some fundamental conceptions. Among them is the fact that we are a Party of the working class and working people; that we are a Party of the Marxist-Leninist type; that we adhere to the Leninist principles on the structure and life of the Party and shall be guided by them; that profound international solidarity with other Communist and Workers' Parties and states is an integral part of our ideology and our policy; that the guiding role of the Party in the entire society and the defense of socialist power — the power of the working class and the working people — is an indispensable component of a socialist society. . . .

It is essential to rally all the healthy forces in the Party around the political platform adopted and approved by the Central Committee. We have already said that this does not mean a formal unity. In the first place, we must dissociate ourselves from incorrect views, ideas

and opinions so as to unite our ranks in the struggle against them on a new basis, on the basis of a political program and adherence to Leninist principles.

This is the only way to restore ideological unity and unity in action, the only way to restore the leading, decisive influence of our Party in our society. . . .

### *Leninist Norms of Party Life*

If we want to reach these goals, we must observe consistently the Leninist norms of Party life, primarily the principle of democratic centralism.

If the Party is to carry out its social mission in this difficult situation — a mission no one can carry out for it — we must not tolerate the practice when such principles as the obligatory fulfillment of Party resolutions, the observance of adopted rules and the obligatory fulfillment of resolutions of higher Party bodies by lower Party bodies and individual members, were seriously weakened and often rejected in practice. Such gross violation of Leninist norms of Party work, which has been tolerated and actually legalized for almost a year and a half, has led our Party to the present situation.

We must defend the rights of Party members. At the same time we must tighten discipline and responsibility of Communists wherever they work — in the Party apparatus and committees, or in elected government and economic posts, or in public functions.

It is incompatible with Leninist norms and the statutes of our Party to permit lower Party bodies to come out against decisions of higher bodies, to criticize or reject them, to organize active campaigns against them and arbitrarily interpret them as has been the case in the past. This paralyzed the entire work of the Party and put our entire policy in question. We must declare explicitly, that if we want to get out of this situation, there can be only one policy of the Communist Party in our country on all fundamental questions, the policy adopted by the supreme Party body between Congresses — the meetings of the Central Committee — which is binding for each and every organization and each and every Party member.

We shall consistently implement this principle. . . .

The Central Committee, its regular and alternate members, must serve as an example to the whole Party. The disunity and contradictory views inside the Central Committee in the past, the non-observance of the Leninist principles of Party life and work by some members of the Central Committee, set a poor example for the whole Party and,

actually, legalized organizational and ideological anarchy in the Party. It is indispensable that the Central Committee, its individual members and commissions, shall unitedly and consistently defend and implement the resolutions, conclusions, and decisions which we adopt after free discussion. . . .

The past practice cannot continue. A radical change is the necessary prerequisite for the success of our work. We must, beginning with the Central Committee, strive for the ideological unity and the unity in action of the Party. . . .

Some might consider that the stress we now place on these established principles of the Communist movement is a retreat from internal Party democracy, from broad democratic practices within the Party. We have nothing of this sort in mind. There have been and will be different views on various questions within the Party — views that may even clash in the process of democratic discussion. The best way out, and the most adequate solution, will be found in the process of ideological and factual debate. We want to preserve and defend the principles of inner-Party democracy. These principles are the foundation for conscious discipline, conscious commitment and selflessness of Communists, which have characterized our movement for decades and without which our Party could never have achieved the successes that mark its history. . . .

### *Improve Standards of Party Work*

Another prerequisite for success is rapidly to improve the standards of our political and organizational work, that of our cadre and of the ideological-political work of the entire Party. The pre-January system of Party guidance to our organizational work and control had almost collapsed and in the stormy months after January it was hardly possible to replace it by a different system. . . .

Much dirt has been cast on the work of the Party apparatus. In more than one case, upright and selfless comrades were abused and many have become disgusted by the state of affairs. This does not mean that there were no mistakes in the work of the Party bodies and apparatus. Of course, there have been. But we must reject an overall condemnation of Party workers, giving them the confidence and assurance that for honest work and for championing the Party's policies, the Party will defend them.

In many cases our functionaries were subject to discrimination. They were slandered and harmed morally and materially only because they championed the positions of the Party, adhered to the internationalist

programs of the Party and did not succumb to the psychological terror of the anti-socialist and Right-wing forces. It is necessary for the Party bodies and organizations to deal with such cases, to rectify mistakes and rehabilitate such people. This is our duty. . . .

We do not intend to carry out a mass screening of our members. The people will screen themselves by their attitude to the platform of the Central Committee, by their commitment, by their participation in implementing our policy. The main political criteria of our cadre policy at this time are: who and in what measure will help, who will be active in time of stress, who will bear the burden of responsibility and display selflessness in the name of the great cause of the Communist movement and socialism. . . .

We shall have to — and this is very urgent — think over our entire work in the political-ideological sphere with regard to the overall political training and education in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism as well as the simultaneous ideological-political struggle against incorrect, opportunist views and tendencies. We must actively react to incorrect views and attitudes and combat them by proper arguments with the aim of convincing people and winning them for our position. We have already said that we shall not yield a fraction of our fundamental Marxist-Leninist positions on basic questions. This does not mean, however, that we will be insensitive to the views of others. On the contrary, we realize the need to intensify and deepen our political work in every organization, in every enterprise, in every village. . . .

Here, too, the method of convincing people by argumentation and with a political approach is the main method of our struggle. . . .

The whole work of consolidating the situation inside the Party, as we have already stated, is of decisive importance in overcoming the crisis situation in our entire society. The ideas put forward here are not new. The bulk of them are incorporated in well-known documents. What is new is the fact that the Presidium of the Central Committee is firmly resolved to implement these principles consistently and energetically. It is convinced that in doing so it will have the support of the entire Central Committee.

On a broad front of Party activity we must pass from words to concrete deeds. We must move from incessant discussions, from doubts and hesitations, to the restoration of that fighting militancy that characterized our Party at all decisive and critical periods. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia is the main force for unity in our state. It unites the efforts of the classes and social strata, the efforts of our people and national minorities, for the solution of the problems that will insure the freedom of our nations and a happy life for our people.

## IDEAS IN OUR TIME

HERBERT APTHEKER

### Universities, Reason and Racism

The most thorough-going, the deepest, challenge to the prevailing structure, practices and purposes of so-called higher learning that has ever occurred in the history of the United States is now in process. It seeks to basically alter that structure and those practices and purposes; the structure hitherto—and still—has been and is oligarchic and racist; the practices have been and are snobbish, conservative and racist; the purposes have been and are to bulwark and to help perpetuate a monopoly-capitalist, imperialist and racist social order.

Significant tension always existed—with periods of more or less intense manifestations thereof—because the colleges and universities could not help reflecting to a degree the class and white supremacist realities and the struggles against them. Such tension also was part of the general crisis that has afflicted capitalism for over fifty years. In addition, the tension sprang specifically from the ostensible purpose of higher learning—i.e., to further scholarship, to seek reality, to advance science. That purpose is, at its heart, in conflict with the structure, purposes and therefore actual practices of most institutions of higher learning in the United States for most of their histories.

The tension is greatest now because imperialism is sicker than ever and notably so in the United States; because developments of a socialist and anti-colonialist nature have challenged the ruling class in the United States not only in a political-military-diplomatic sense, but also ideologically; because the numerical and qualitative character of the student body (and faculty) have been transformed; and —part of all of the above, but still having an identity and impact of its own—because the anti-racist and national liberation developments have reached unprecedented heights and necessarily carry fantastic impact in the United States.

All of this is symbolized in the atrocious war conducted by the U.S. government against the people of Vietnam—it involves colonialism, racism, socialism; its course has been particularly anti-human; the resistance of the thirty million “naked brown dwarfs” (to use Lyndon B. Johnson’s characteristically elegant prose) has been tena-

cious, tempestuous and successful; and this latter fact has meant hundreds of thousands of casualties falling only (so far as Americans are concerned) upon the young. Further, that the Saigon government is not a government but is rather a hand-picked group of gangsters and traitors supporting the crucifixion of their own people and imprisoning and torturing tens of thousands of their own compatriots are facts known to every young man and woman in every college and university in the United States. Finally, that this war represents not only the costs involved in the above, but also represents an expenditure of about thirty billion dollars each year while vast human needs at home go unmet, also is known to every young man and woman in the colleges and universities of the United States. The anti-human character of a society that adopts such priorities is palpable and affronts especially the youthful with their natural eagerness for joy and usefulness and life.

It is characteristic of United States history that the most sensitive indicator of developments and the force in the forefront of those developments are the black young men and women—in and out of the colleges. The contradictions are most intense among them; the consequent determination to resolve those contradictions is most dedicated among them. Thus, as so often in American history, the struggle of the present young black generation to restructure higher learning is a basic element in the whole struggle of all youth in the United States—and all who esteem democratic and humane values—to democratize and humanize higher learning.

\* \* \*

The present challenge to the dominant system of higher education will persist; it is no more ephemeral than is the challenge to the system of capitalism as a whole. On the contrary, basically it is part of that historic challenge. Ruling-class resistance will be, therefore, intense; all forms will be (and have been) used: violent repression, legal frame-up, bribery and corruption, police spies and provocateurs, witch-hunting, economic pressures. And not least will be the ideological attack. The latter, where it comes from outside the academic community—from such savants as Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and J. Edgar Hoover—will be coarse, infinitely hypocritical and dishonest; that is, in a word, it will be as vile as its proponents. Where it comes from inside the academic community, it will be expressed in “liberal” (or even “radical”) terminology, it will appeal to academic and intellectual freedom, to the requirements of rational discourse, to the need for calm if scholarship is to persist and develop. It will condemn barbarians of the Right and the Left with fine impartiality, and

no one at all—neither Reagan nor Hoover nor Nixon—will fail to understand who in fact is being condemned though, as part of the division of labor, all three may well express disdain for or impatience with the liberals.

Examples abound now; there is hardly a major address at a scholarly association's meeting which does not reflect this approach to one or another degree, as that by Professor Thomas Bailey at the American Historical Association's 1968 Meeting or that by Professor C. Vann Woodward at the 1969 Meeting of the Organization of American Historians or that by Professor Julian P. Boyd at the 1968 gathering of the Association of American University Presses. These appear in appropriate professional journals; analagous essays are crowding the prestigious monthly magazines, as one on Black Studies by Professor Eugene Genovese in the June *Atlantic* and another by Professor Henry Pachter in the March-April issue of *Dissent*, called “Teaching Negro History.”

These speeches and essays deal either with the general challenge to the traditional structure and practices of the universities or with that specific challenge demanding Black Studies. We select for brief commentary on this occasion the essay “Between the Spur and the Bridle,” by Julian P. Boyd;\* at another opportunity I intend to analyze the most significant of the challenges to the Black Studies concept, such as those coming from Pachter, Woodward, Genovese and others.

\* \* \*

Professor Boyd is the Chief Editor of the distinguished series of volumes of the papers of Thomas Jefferson. His essay contains many of the virtues of the third President; gracious writing, much learning, wry wit, a concern lest tyranny grow. As to the latter it is worth noting that not only did Professor Boyd denounce George Wallace in a speech delivered some months prior to the 1968 elections; he was one of the handful of academicians who damned Joseph McCarthy while that monster still was formidable.

Alas, however, his essay contains many of the limitations of the third President, too; basically elitist, fundamentally racist and formalistic in its concepts of democracy. These failings were serious when manifested in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; today they seem to be positively vitiating.

\* The Boyd essay has been published in pamphlet form by the Association of American University Presses; it also appears in the Spring, 1969 issue of *The Virginia Quarterly Review*.

Professor Boyd's estimate of the U.S. social order and its present Government and that Government's role in world affairs is positive; his description of the present realities of institutions of higher learning in the United States is absolutely glowing. In both he is wrong and the challengers to that estimate and those realities are right.

In a rather unfair passage, Professor Boyd writes that "our self-anointed messiahs" report our society to be corrupt and that the United States "as a nation [is] sick." This is unfair because such findings are being reported by people like the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Managing Editor of the *New York Times*; Robert Welch might consider J. William Fulbright and James Reston as "self-anointed messiahs" but this seems hardly appropriate for Julian P. Boyd.

The harshness of tone and the *ad hominem* approach reflect perhaps Mr. Boyd's passionate disagreement with those who do not hold with him when he writes that "mistaken as many of the policies [of the U.S.] resulting from our sense of world mission may have been," "yet no great nation in history has exercised its might with comparable restraint and generosity." The inhabitants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, of North Korea, of North and South Vietnam, of all Latin America surely would not agree—and the consensus among the college youth in the United States today is otherwise. They see a policy which has been unrestrained and brutal and they think this policy does not stem from a sense of world mission but rather from a hunger for world hegemony—for a *Pax Americana* on the part of the class dominating that nation. They detest the policy and do not experience such a hunger.

Mr. Boyd writes that among the community of intellectuals there have been developed qualities permitting "rational discussion" and he names these qualities as "tolerance, generosity, moral courage, justice, decency, and respect for reason." But the consensus among college youth is that rational discussion has not characterized institutions of higher learning in the United States and that the admirable qualities listed by Mr. Boyd have not permeated its administrative and decision-making and curriculum-making bodies. On the contrary these have been characterized by timidity, opportunism, arrogance, prejudice, elitism and racism.

Mr. Boyd reports that "our universities and other institutions [have been] designed to give reason a chance"; but these institutions of higher learning have not been so designed. They have been exclusionary; they have been bastions of the status quo; they have been

permeated by ugly class, religious and—above all—racial prejudices. And they have permitted themselves to become servitors of the rich and bulwarks of the military-industrial complex. They have trained policemen for fascistic Greece and monarchical Iran and sadistic Saigon puppets; they have master-minded counter-revolutionary strategy in Latin-America and the Mid-East; they have served as CIA conduits in Africa and Asia and Eastern Europe.

Their boards of trustees are not "the most innocent and least powerful of witches." They are not witches at all; would that they were mere conjured-up figures of fevered brains. They are, in fact, the Hearsts and the Rockefellers and the Du Ponts and the Fords and the Gianninis; and the present college generation knows that (if Mr. Boyd does not). Such people are far from innocent and far from powerless; they do not waste their time on boards and they do hold in their hands the ultimate and the decisive policy-making control over higher education in the United States.

Mr. Boyd writes that it was because this country was founded on the concept of popular sovereignty that it has been such a magnet to the peoples of the earth. Certainly it is true that in many ways its political and social and economic characteristics—compared to the rest of the earth—did serve as attractions for several generations. But when Mr. Boyd says that "its appeal was universal" he much exaggerates it and when he says that because of it "this nation came to be a people of all races" he forgets—incredible as it may seem for 1968—how it came about that African-derived peoples came to this nation. This "forgetfulness" permeates the article; thus, in his insistence that the idea of popular sovereignty makes possible here "continuing revolution" and therefore rules out "the right of a new revolution" since "its institutions would accommodate themselves" to that "continuing revolution," he omits from the "institutions" that of slavery and he omits from the revolutionary accommodations required of those institutions the Second American Revolution which took 500,000 lives and, being aborted, remains to achieve fulfillment.

Mr. Boyd actually ascribes to the 17th century concepts of Locke and the 18th and 19th century concepts of Madison, a determination to abide by "the will of the majority"! Of course, everyone who was anyone in those centuries—reading Locke and Madison—knew that when they spoke of majority they meant majority of those possessing property and that the security of property was *the* purpose of government (and further they meant a majority not only of those possessing

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# COMMUNICATIONS

TIM WHEELER

## Some Thoughts On Student Rebellions

The main feature of the student upsurge since 1964 has been the struggle against the war policy of U.S. imperialism. This has become the motor force for all aspects of struggle by U.S. students, black and white.

The historic event which above all has propelled millions of students into the struggle for social change is the Vietnam war. Since the escalation of this war the movement has witnessed the entrance into militant struggle of growing masses of students from all sectors of the nation, of diverse background, religion and political persuasion. Recently some 250 campus editors and student council presidents adopted as their own the slogan "Hell no, we won't go."

"Brothers and sisters" of the old style fraternities have joined the movement but most notable is the "new fraternity" consisting of "brothers and sisters" of the resistance.

The initiative in this struggle has rested with radical students from its very beginning. Radicals, black and white, have been the pacesetters. They coin the slogans. They determine the tactics. The words of their vocabulary have become the common parlance of all the students.

They are the force of unity, of mass cohesion in sharp battles on the campuses everywhere.

The radicals filled the vacuum when liberalism collapsed. They advanced when liberalism retreated. They held firm when liberalism equivocated.

This fact of the radical initiative is the first thing we must grasp in assessing the struggle for a social change in America. The initiative of student radicals is not in isolation from a corresponding process in society as a whole.

The fact is, the initiative in struggle off campus has also passed into the hands of the Left. It is radicals in the community also who have led the sharp battles against the war and racism. In the shops, this process is just now beginning. Here, too, radicals will be the decisive force in the rank-and-file upsurge. The Left is gaining in prestige and authority everywhere as the struggle in the U.S. intensifies.

The deepest shift in the student upsurge has been the awakening of self-interest issues. The difference between the generalizd pacifist, "pox on both your houses" slogans of the early years of the struggle and the new slogan "Hell no, we won't go" is

## STUDENT REBELLIONS

the new quality of *self-interest*.

What "Hell no, we won't go" says is, that yes, the war is *immoral*, but even more, *it is against my self-interest*. This is the real significance of the shift from "protest" to "resistance." This is the essence of "anti-imperialism."

It was this discovery by radicals of the social dynamite of self-interest demands which transformed the movement from one of thousands to one of millions. The anti-war movement on the campuses is now an overwhelmingly *majority movement*.

Why was the self-interest question so crucial? The fact is, the war in Vietnam has deeply intensified the crisis of higher education. It is the war which strikes most sharply against black students. Black and Chicano enrollment at San Francisco State College actually *dropped after* the escalation of the war through a combination of factors. First, because the military draft snatched the most promising black and Chicano high school students for the war at a faster rate than it did the less gifted students. Thus, those who best "survived" slum education were the ones first snatched for war duty. Second because scholarships and other assistance programs began to dry up as appropriations from the federal government were cut to pay for the war in Vietnam.

A direct tie can be found between the war in Vietnam and the profound anti-racist struggle which rocked San Francisco State

College and rapidly spread across the country.

The war hangs like a sword of Damocles over all students, 2-S deferment or not.

Of course, the war has affected higher education in other ways, too. Funds have been slashed for research in every area except the most openly genocidal — those which can be "justified" for "defense." One of President Nixon's first acts was to cut in half the appropriation for aid to education while calling for a \$4 billion boost in military "research and development."

Campus slumism has grown to crisis proportions with millions of students living in apartments equaled in filth and squalor only by the ghettos of the inner city. Madison, Wisconsin is in fact, a kind of student Bedford-Stuyvesant. Prices for books, rent, food, clothing have escalated with every bomb dropped in Vietnam until many students live in dire poverty. Of course, campus programs have been cut to the bone.

Liberal arts students especially have felt the economy knife. What conceivable "defense" value is to be found in "humanities" when the nation is involved in a war of genocide? Chaucer goes to the bottom of the priority pile.

Bettina Aptheker is correct in asserting that students represent both quantitatively and qualitatively a new force for social change in America. If radical students are to give continued leadership to this vast student upsurge the question they must answer is: *where is this movement headed? What is the goal? What*



is the strategy for achieving victory?

Bettina states that the strategy is to form an alliance of students, workers and the Negro people in struggle against monopoly capitalism. I think this is correct. This she says, is the necessary precondition for a successful socialist revolution in America.

One of the questions student leaders must examine is the relationship between the long-range goal of socialism and short-term reforms. It is vital always to keep these two sides of the struggle clearly in mind. It is the essence of deepening the *self-interest* aspect of the struggle.

I don't think this relationship is dealt with very clearly in Bettina's article.

What is the immediate goal of the radical movement in the United States today? It is to end the war in Vietnam and withdraw U.S. troops. It is to compel the U.S. government to use the \$30 billion squandered in Vietnam each year to provide *free college education with stipends* to all interested and able youth. The immediate goal is radically to expand the opportunity for black, Puerto Rican and Chicano youth to get an education. It is to guarantee that this education has a content which corresponds to the needs and cultural interests of all youth.

We distinguish "immediate" demands from ultimate demands because the struggle for social change is a process with a history of development. Some will say: "We cannot get those demands without socialism." Others will

argue: "These are reforms that can be accomplished within the framework of capitalism."

I don't think this is really the issue. We cannot by ourselves determine what can be won under capitalism. This is because it depends on what concessions the capitalists themselves decide to make. We must place the demands because they correspond to the immediate interests of masses of students. If the capitalists grant these concessions, we will welcome them. If not, then we must be with the masses to intensify the struggle further. We will not place any artificial "timetable" on how far or how high the demands of *masses* of workers, black people and students will go. They are the ones who establish the timetable. Our task is only to try to speed it up.

But what would be the consequence of abandoning the demand for the end to the war in Vietnam? This would sidetrack the Left. It would isolate it from the masses of the students. The end to the war is the *sine qua non* of the further development of the movement.

Yet this demand is rejected by a vocal minority in the Left. They substitute the demand to "destroy the system." This they call "anticapitalism." And this, they say, is the "immediate" demand.

Underlying this position is rejection of the strategy of peaceful coexistence. Far from advancing the struggle for peace as the central life-and-death question for the nation, these forces ignore the danger of world war or

— even worse — welcome it.

While it is true that millions of students "identify" with the National Liberation Front, this is not a simple matter. The Communist Party is involved in a struggle for a *correct estimate* among the masses of the meaning of the Vietnamese struggle.

Radicalization develops in a contradictory fashion. With new radical ideas come *bourgeois concepts* in new forms. This is why it is possible for young radicals to identify with the NLF while maintaining bourgeois illusions about the Soviet Union and the role it plays in the world.

This is why many radical students mistake the war of national liberation in Vietnam for *their own struggle* and, as Bettina puts it, mechanically "transpose" the NFL tactics to the U.S. scene, concluding that the thing now is "guerilla war" on campus.

Because of the persistence of these illusions, it is vitally necessary for the Communist Party to maintain a constant friendly dialogue with the new radicals arguing our position from an independent Marxist-Leninist stance.

We believe that the struggle for socialism is inseparable from the struggle for world peace. As Gus Hall has said: "Peaceful coexistence is the strategy for socialism." Conversely, imperialism pins its hopes increasingly on turning back the clock of history through wars of aggression. Some even plot the third world war.

Only if the new radicals understand the role of the Soviet Union can they understand the

concept of peaceful coexistence— here I believe, Bettina's article is at its weakest. She states that while the "primary" contradiction is between socialism and capitalism, the "sharpest" conflict is between imperialism and the national liberation struggle.

We see the Soviet Union as the inner fortress of the world socialist system. The Soviet Union is at the frontier of human progress. I said that the initiative in the people's movements in the United States rests with the radicals. In the realm of human progress as a whole, the initiative rests with socialism. The United States is losing the initiative. Increasingly it is forced into the position of "reacting" to the initiatives which arise in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is capturing the initiative in every realm of human endeavor. It will be the first in space technology, first in the standard of living for its people, first in health, education, science and culture. This is the real significance of the "new epoch" of the transition from capitalism to socialism. The achievement of world peace and disarmament would vastly accelerate this shift in initiative. Every new triumph of socialist technology sends out shock waves to all corners of the globe.

Bettina fails to mention one of the most explosive factors in the growth of mass education in the United States. It was Sputnik which added a powerful new thrust to the struggle of masses in the U.S. to expand educational opportunities despite opposition from the bourgeoisie.

In the contest between moribund capitalism and rising socialism the millions are the prize. And the eyes of the millions are fastened on the Soviet Union first of all — the most advanced socialist nation.

*And here is where the sharpest contradictions between socialism and capitalism is revealed.*

Bettina unconsciously succumbs to the anti-Soviet pressures of the New Left in counterposing the Great October Revolution to the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions.

The struggle for socialism is based on *internationalism*. Why? Because the struggle for socialism is a part of a world historic process. This process began with the Great October Revolution. *Cuba and Vietnam are simply its further development.* Indeed, the revolutionary masses of Cuba and Vietnam recognize that their revolutions are the triumphant continuation of this process.

Of course the bourgeoisie fosters these divisions, attempting to counterpose national liberation struggles to the Russian Revolution.

But student radicals eventually will reject this. They will come to see that the Great October Revolution is indeed "*the revolution of our generation.*"

I would like to say a few words about "adventurism." We use a class yardstick in judging whether tactics are "adventurist." Adventurism is not just a certain tactic employed in a given situation. Adventurism is tactics carried out under a *specific ideological banner* which splits the

movement and exposes it to destructive counterattack.

The militant tactics of the students for the most part have had the opposite effect. They have united the students in the face of repression from the highest centers of power in the nation.

Was the occupation of the Cornell Building by black students armed with rifles and shotguns "adventurist?" It was not. The bourgeois press has attempted to smear the Cornell student struggle by making it appear that the issue there was guns on campus. This is a clear attempt to divert attention from the real issue — the defeat of racism and discrimination on campus.

The students made it very clear that this was a self-defense measure taken as a symbolic warning to white racists who themselves were armed to the teeth and who had threatened to kill the black students.

The black students took this action to show the racists that they would not be intimidated by the overwhelming majority of the Cornell students, black and white.

But let us be clear about this historic incident. The Cornell students were *not* telling the nation that the student movement has now entered a "new phase" of "armed struggle." The act was carried out in a specific situation for clearly defined purposes. What they did was not adventurism, but *it would be adventurism* to draw extravagant conclusions from it that the "thing to do now is go get your gun."

#### STUDENT REBELLIONS

This is not a *mass* line, this is a Leftist dodge which risks isolating the radical leadership from the masses of the students.

I think we must see the process of radicalization as an outgrowth of the struggle for peace. *Only if the radical leadership clings stubbornly to the centrality of the struggle for peace can it continue to grow in prestige and authority over the movement.* Bettina points out that a dra-

matic process of differentiation began in 1966-67, between those going toward anarchism and those going toward Marxism-Leninism. This is a profound observation. The fact is that tens of thousands of radical students are moving steadily toward a Marxist-Leninist outlook and it is essential that an independent Marxist Leninist youth organization be prepared to win these students.

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*Continued from page 59*

property, but also those who were male and were white). And the present student generation in the United States has found these secrets out—even if the editor of Jefferson has not yet done so!

Mr. Boyd fears that the present protesters have as their aim "destroying universities and defeating the purposes for which they stand." No. The purposes which the universities in the United States hitherto have furthered are not worthy purposes; they are purposes that contradict what should be the purposes of centers of learning. Such centers should be *radical*; they should be centers to get at the root of the sickness that does characterize U.S. society. They should be communities of real scholars—that is, men and women devoted to making this land one that is free of racism, poverty, indignity, violence and war and to seeking with their students all the finest that humanity has hitherto created and how best to apply this and to develop this and to make a fruitful life for all here and now. I do not think Thomas Jefferson—were he alive now—would object to this; I know that this is what the restless student youth today in the United States, black and white, want. On the success of their effort depends not the destruction of universities in the United States but their transformation meriting the title of institutions of higher learning.

June 14, 1969

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