

1956

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NOTES AND PROPOSALS

For the coming convention of
the Communist Party

Submitted by:

A Group of Communist Intellectuals

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1. The Gravity of the Crisis

We believe that the Draft Resolution, adopted on September 13, 1956, is wholly unsatisfactory. We are convinced that a good part of the membership, possibly a majority, are opposed to the resolution, and feel as we do, that its adoption would weaken the party and even threaten its continued existence.

We consider it imperative that the party continue to exist, making its contribution to the welfare of our nation and the cause of socialism. We see no organization that can at present take the place of the party. We wish to function with greater clarity and initiative. But we cannot function effectively in an organization in which the forms of free discussion (letters to the press, bulletins, resolutions, etc.) are contradicted by the inability of the leadership to listen, and hear and interpret the views of the membership and friends, thus developing policy on the basis of discussion and argument.

The National Committee's "Message to State Conventions and Clubs" (published in the D. W., Dec. 24, 1956) asserts that:

"a fundamental basis for unity of the Party and the work of the Convention lies in the general agreement with the first three sections of the Resolution. These sections project a policy on such vital questions as an estimate of the present situation in which we live and work, the path of struggle toward a people's and anti-monopoly coalition, and our views regarding an American road to Socialism."

These are the questions on which there is the widest disagreement, and which relate most urgently to the whole theoretical line and practical activity of the Party. We find the National Committee's message insensitive to the feeling of the membership, and showing a marked inability to digest and coordinate opposing views. The tone of the message suggests that it relates chiefly to arguments among national leaders; we assume that references to "invectives of liquidationism, revisionism, or stand-patism," and "abusive charges with respect to international working class relations" are intended to describe the debate inside the Committee.

We cannot believe that this is a proper characterization of the views of thoughtful, experienced and responsible members, who consider that the draft resolution gives an erroneous estimate of the American and world situation. We regret the use of abstract categories of thought (liquidationism, revisionism, etc.) instead of dealing with real issues.

The questions that face the coming convention are too grave -- the crisis in the party is too serious -- to be settled by abstract "confessions" of "leftist errors", and

abstract generalizations about the American and world situation, undocumented by historical data, and substituting categories of "right opportunism" and "left-sectarianism" for the living reality.

2. For a re-vitalized American Left.

Americans who believe that socialism answers the needs of the American people have a primary obligation to get together, to unite and organize, in a cause that embodies the highest hopes of mankind and the highest interests and welfare of our country.

No group or party can arrogate to itself the possession of "Marxist" purity, or the right to lead by decree. We of the Communist Party are a comparatively small organization, patriotically dedicated to the American people and the free development of our country. We have proved our faith by the number of us who have gone to prison in defense of the Constitution and its Bill of Rights.

We are proud of this service. We are proud that we have participated boldly, and often at great personal sacrifice, in the struggle for peace, democracy, and the right of association and belief, in the United States.

There are a considerable number of Americans -- perhaps nearly a million -- who have had some contact with Marxist thought and activity during the past quarter of a century. Most of these people were members or friends of the Communist Party. The party has a special obligation, not only to its present membership, but to all those who have severed their connection with the party, but have not abandoned their faith in socialism.

There are many reasons for the severance of contact with the party. The pressure of the witch-hunt and its accompanying propaganda have been factors. But the party's errors of policy, its authoritarian pronouncements and undemocratic methods of work have been, and continue to be, basic reasons for its lessening influence.

An examination of the errors of the party is very much in order. But it must be based on adequate research, close analysis of facts, and the use of the method of Marxism. It cannot be accomplished by pinning dogmatic labels on past actions.

The essence of dogmatism is the use of abstract phrases as a substitute for concrete study of social situations. "Left sectarianism" and "right opportunism" have historical meaning. But when these terms are used to describe everything and anything, they tell us more about the subjective attitudes of the participants (which may indeed be "rightist" or "leftist" in the real sense) than about issues and policies which cannot be so simply labelled.

The ill-considered shifts from right to left, and from left to right, are sufficient evidence that the party and its leaders have failed to use Marxism as a creative guide to understanding and action.

The revelations and events of the past year show that we have ignored the method of Marxism in our views of the Soviet Union, assuming that the only contradictions which seriously interfere with the course of socialist growth are external, and that the internal development is "absolute," guided by wise leaders.

We continue to ignore the method of Marxism in the debate at present being conducted in the American Communist Party.

In submitting these notes and proposals, we do not pretend that we have "mastered" the Marxist method. Nor are we so bold as to suggest that our analysis is definitive.

On the contrary, we seek to avoid finalities, to recognize the limitations of our present knowledge, and to point the way to more creative and all-sided understanding of a changing world.

We believe that we can make a modest contribution in exposing the fallacy of one-sided and subjectively-conditioned views, and establishing certain principles of Marxist discourse which will help us to strengthen the Party and guide us in the tasks that lie before us.

Marxism is an uncompromising search for truth. The search is conducted by the method of dialectical and historical materialism, which sees nature and society in constant flux and movement, decay and growth, conflict and change. Therefore the contradictions, the interaction of opposing forces in any situation, provide the key to the process that is taking place.

Fixed habits of thought tend to crystallize opposing attitudes in static and undialectical views. We hold that this is what has happened in the course of party discussion; the polarization of "right opportunist" and "left sectarian" concepts makes it impossible to explore and resolve contradictions in terms of a creative synthesis and a higher level of understanding.

In attempting to develop an all-sided approach, we shall avoid labels. We are wholly unsympathetic to the views of Foster, which seem to us to ignore the impact of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the Krushchev report, and to use "Marxism-Leninism" as a static theory. We are equally opposed to the views of Gates, which seem lacking in the insights of Marxism, and to offer wishful thinking as a substitute for careful study of contemporary realities.

Life and death issues, issues that will shape the future, face our country and the world. Marxists must meet the challenge of the present and the future.

3. Socialism and Human Rights.

The revelations presented in the so-called "secret" Krushchev report, created a crisis in the lands of socialism and in socialist parties throughout the world. Recent events have indicated the urgency of the historical questions raised by the report.

The draft resolution answers these questions by stating that the American Communist Party "tended to accept uncritically many views of Marxists of other countries," and then proceeds to praise "the courage shown" by the CPSU "in making these disclosures and the profound process of self-correction" that followed. The Krushchev report is obviously not self-critical; it ignores the Marxist analysis which is essential for an understanding of the errors and crimes committed during the Stalin era. Recent history shows that "the process of self-correction" has not proceeded in a satisfactory manner.

Data is not as yet available for a full critique of the Stalin period. But it is possible to define some of the main contradictions which attended the building of socialism in the Soviet Union.

The goal of socialism is human freedom. The whole body of Marxist theory, initiated by Marx and Engels and carried forward by Lenin, is a noble declaration of the Rights of Man:

"The possibility of securing for every member of society, through social production, an existence which is not only fully sufficient from a material standpoint and becoming richer from day to day, but also guarantees to them the completely unrestricted development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties -- this possibility now exists for the first time, but it does exist."

"It is only from this point that men, with full consciousness, will fashion their own history; it is only from this point that the social causes set in motion by men will have, predominantly and in constantly increasing measure, the effects willed by men. It is humanity's leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom." *

But the conditions which Engels describes as providing the possibility of this "leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom" are conditions which did not exist in the backward economy of the Soviet Union.

The harsh contradiction between the problems of building socialism in a backward and impoverished country, and the dream of human freedom, is embodied in the contradiction between the theories of Stalin and his associates and their actual practice.

It is the contradiction between the "Stalin Constitution" and its systematic violation. Leaders of the Soviet Union repeatedly attacked bureaucracy and dogmatism. Stalin proclaimed that the key to social progress lies in people, in the free development of the creative energies of the masses.

Are we to conclude that the adoption of the 1936 Constitution, with the most advanced and specific guarantees of human rights that had ever been written into law, was an act of deception and cynicism? Such a conclusion is unwarranted, and ignores the historical process that brought the Constitution into being.

In 1936, Soviet society had reached a point of development which demanded the wider participation and initiative of the masses. This need was reflected in Stalin's increasing emphasis on the role of the people and the responsibility of leaders to know and follow the popular will.

The Constitution expresses not only the ultimate aspiration of the Soviet masses, but their workaday belief in human rights and the dignity of the individual, a belief which is rooted in Soviet education and life, the guiding principle in building socialism.

Yet the building of socialism was managed and directed by methods that contradicted these basis principles. The methods were dictated by the urgency of building heavy industry, forcing a rapid increase in agricultural production,

* Anti-Duhring

and at the same time developing a powerful military machine. 1936 was the year of the Franco rebellion in Spain, showing that Hitler's time-table of conquest would soon involve the Russian people in a war for survival.

The contradiction between the promise of the Soviet Constitution and the illegal and criminal exercise of authority is the key to this crucial period of Soviet development. It expresses social and economic conflicts which were not solved -- because their practical solution was impossible without adjusting theory and practice.

Underlying all the contradictions and dilemmas was the inescapable historical fact that a high level of industrial development is the prerequisite for a high level of human rights and personal fulfillment. And peace is essential for the exercise of these rights and potentialities.

We can recognize the problem without condoning the incorrect and dangerous methods which were used in attempting a solution.

Did it advance the cause of socialism to violate the newly adopted Soviet Constitution? Did it strengthen and unify the people to use perjured evidence, and confessions obtained by torture, to destroy experienced and devoted people?

These methods were immoral in a practical social sense: they destroyed human resources needed for building the new society. They put a brake, at least to some degree, on the creative activity of people.

We know today that bureaucracy caused waste and inefficiency, that the will of party leaders was substituted for the collective will of the masses. The structure of Soviet power came into increasing collision, not only with the goals of a socialist society, but with the means adopted to achieve these goals.

With the growing gap between theory and practice, it became necessary to exert harmful controls over science and the arts, so that the dangerous contradiction between Communist ideology and Soviet reality would not be exposed. Political interference with writers, artists and scientists tended to corrupt the social function of culture -- the function which is especially to be guarded and utilized in socialist society -- as the means of interpreting and communicating truth.

Therefore, we find a deepening contradiction in every field of Soviet culture, between the vast achievements of science and art dedicated to human freedom and restrictions which stultified further free development.

Soviet culture reflects the errors. But it also reflects the shining pages of Soviet history, the truth of unparalleled accomplishments in conquering illiteracy and attaining industrial self-sufficiency in a single generation.

In the Second World War, the Soviet people played a major part in saving the world from fascism, inaugurating a new era of human development.

The changed relationship of forces on a global scale that began in 1945 arises from a combination of historical causes: the failure of fascism's attempt to turn

back the clock of history, the demonstrated strength of the Soviet Union, the great movement of colonial and semi-colonial countries against imperialism, the weakness of the capitalist powers of Western Europe, the enormous potential of modern science for the welfare or destruction of mankind, unfolded in the mushroom cloud that rose over Hiroshima.

The changed world situation placed great issues on the agenda of history. Never before has the question of human survival been posed so definitely, so clearly related to the necessity of ending war and poverty and oppression. This is the inexorable necessity for mankind's giant step forward into the realm of freedom.

But the forward movement involves the clash of vast forces and interests. Capitalism faces the challenge of socialism. Imperialism seeks to hold back the tide of colonial liberation. Within each nation, in the lands of socialism as well as in the countries of capitalism, the impact of the world situation, the threat of war and the difficulties of economic development, create intensified contradictions and conflicts.

In every land, men might well repeat the words spoken by Lincoln in the dark days of the American Civil War: "The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves."

In Lincoln's time, the enlargement of freedom created the need "to think anew and act anew." It is fundamentally the same issue, on a world scale, that faces us today.

Above all, we must disenthrall ourselves from over-simplified and therefore un-Marxist views of social development.

In examining the tensions and crises that have developed in the countries that have moved toward socialism in the past decade, we must consider both the difficulty of the tasks that were undertaken and the inability of Communist leaders to "rise with the occasion", "to think anew and act anew" in dealing with unprecedented difficulties.

The problem in Eastern Europe, and especially in Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, is again the problem of building socialism in backward economies based chiefly on primitive agricultural production. There are many questions that can be asked: Was the pace of socialist development too rapid? Was it wise to impose socialism on a conquered country like Hungary, which had been a Hitler ally during the war? These questions lead to many others. What were the alternatives to the rapid political and economic transformation of these nations that was undertaken? Could Hungary have adopted bourgeois democracy in its classic form? How would a bourgeois democratic regime in Hungary have handled the question of ecclesiastical and semi-feudal land-holdings?

In dealing with the Hungarian tragedy, we must examine both the specific national background and its relationship to international events. To what extent was the American Project X involved in the uprisings of October and November, 1956? Did the Soviet Union believe early in November that Hungary was to be used as a starting point for World War III, and that the French and English invasion of Egypt was related to the war plan? Was Romania and the Ukraine directly threatened by the possibility of a fascist regime in Hungary? Would even a "moderate" regime in

Hungary, advised and influenced by the United States, be a constant threat to the oil of Romania and the wealth of the Ukraine?

We ask these questions -- knowing there are no easy answers -- in order to show that such questions have not been asked, or have been dealt with in terms of guesswork and prejudice, in discussion of the Hungarian events among American Communists. The argument has been conducted in terms of absolutes, one side offering an absolute endorsement of Soviet policy, while the other side assumes that Hungarian freedom is an abstraction, without reference to political organization, class relationships within the country, historical development of Magyar nationalism in relation to surrounding Slav populations, fascist forces inside and outside the country, and the international pressures which affect all these factors.

The contradictions in the Hungarian situation are the driving force of its development, and enable us to grasp its relationship in the continuing world struggle for socialism and human rights. The struggle is conducted under difficult and varying conditions -- the load of history burdens us all, and we labor for the future under the whip of tyranny and oppression.

We are not vulgar opportunists who hold that "the end justifies the means." Nor are we idle dreamers who ignore the fact that struggle for freedom is conducted by people who are not free. It is a struggle against chains and guns. Chains are not broken by moral aphorisms. Bayonets are not turned aside by kind words.

If people were already free, they could choose the most desirable course without the interference of exploiters and oppressors. Today their choice is limited, depending on the specific situation. But the choices cannot be made effectively unless the goal of freedom is kept in view, not only as an ultimate aim, but as the means to its accomplishment.

This is understood by people everywhere. They know that lack of freedom condemns them to poverty and starves their children. They know that freedom, to organize and fight, to work in brotherhood for common aims, is the path to the future.

4. War and Peace.

Rosy predictions concerning an "absolute" development toward world peace, and a long period of friendly competition between the Socialist and capitalist sectors of the world, have been rudely shattered by events of the past months. The draft Resolution has been proved inaccurate in its one-sided emphasis on "the prospect of bringing the cold war to an end, and ushering in a new era of peaceful coexistence". Today, it is recognized that the war danger has increased. Yet the voices of the people cry out for peace in every land. The strength and solidarity of the popular movements for peace on a world scale, and the less organized but nonetheless strong sentiment for peace on the part of the American people, are the best proof that war is by no means "inevitable".

We have witnessed recently a double campaign of propaganda in the American press: on the one hand, a stepped-up program of war incitement, anti-Soviet propaganda and demands for the "liberation" of Hungary and other countries

moving toward socialism. At the same time, there is discussion of a major turn in American foreign policy, toward greater friendship for India and other countries of Asia, and a new and more liberal "Point Four" program.

These tendencies mark the deep-going contradictions in American foreign policy. The use of war, and the threat of war, as a main instrument of policy, is still the hall-mark of American diplomacy. This is indicated in the proposed "Eisenhower doctrine" which envisions the use of armed force to protect American interests in the Middle East.

At the same time, there is a shift in American diplomacy, which reflects the changed relationship of forces on a global scale. The peoples of Asia and the Pacific area have become an increasingly powerful factor in international affairs. The change began with the emergence of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and the further development of Asia was signalized by the Bandung Conference in 1954.

The failure of the December 1956 NATO meeting in Paris exposed the weakening of the European alliance constructed by the U. S. and intended to provide a Western army.

The meeting in Washington between Nehru and Eisenhower, immediately following the NATO failure, shows the changing nature of American policy. It is possible that Nehru's persuasion, and other practical considerations, will bring the long-deferred American recognition of People's China.

The admission of China to its rightful place in the United Nations would be a giant step toward peace. It would give enormously added power to the anti-colonial struggle, and would strengthen the democratic forces throughout the world.

Pessimism or concepts of war's "inevitability" are unrealistic and one-sided. But it is equally unrealistic to cherish illusions concerning American policy, or to assume that we are entering a long period of relaxed tensions and peaceful interchange of culture and commerce.

American policy cannot be defined in terms of absolutes, for it evolves out of conflicts and contradictions which become more intense as the domestic and foreign problems of American capitalism become more insoluble. There are sharp differences within the ruling groups in the United States, expressing real conflicts of interest, and varying reactions to the pressure of public opinion and shifting international relationships.

However, the differing wishes and recommendations of ruling groups, significant as they are, cannot be regarded as the main features of the present situation. If we place too much emphasis on the policies of monopoly capital, we tend to over-estimate its power, and we fail to see its contradictory tendencies as subjective and distorted reflections, in the minds of leaders and rulers, of realities which they cannot fully understand.

Marxists cannot view the changes that are taking place and impending in the world as an incoherent clash of irrational forces. Underlying the complexity of these changes, giving meaning and direction even to those twists and turns of events which seem unpredictable, is the global clash between the anti-colonial, socialist and people's movements, and the imperial power of monopoly capital.

What is unpredictable arises from the infinite variety of social, economic, political and cultural conditions, that affect, and sometimes temporarily change, the main movement of events.

But the great design of history is determined by the struggle of classes. Those who toil have various class interests, but the over-all aim of the exploited classes is the elimination of exploitation. And the over-all aim of the exploiters, and specifically the monopoly capitalists, is dictated by their class needs -- maximum profits from the surplus value extorted from the laborers, and on an international scale control of strategic resources and raw materials, intensive exploitation of colonial and semi-colonial areas.

The classic methods of diplomacy remain in use -- political pressure, economic penetration, military interference.

The rulers of the United States are aware of the risks of atomic warfare. The bomb that holds the threat of universal death is an apple of discord in business and government circles. Yet Americans in places of power and responsibility still speak of a "crusade" to annihilate socialism. Official policy of the State Department is still based on the possibility of such a crusade, provided the enemy can be so weakened that the risk of global destruction is minimized. This is the meaning of the policies that are being spelled out in the Middle East. The authoritative periodical, U. S. News and World Report, devoted part of its issue of November 9th, 1956, to the question -- "What Little Wars will mean to the United States", outlining a comprehensive military plan to conform to this prospect.

The advantage of "Little Wars" was advocated two weeks after the attempt at counter-revolution in Hungary, when American officials still hoped that further disturbances in the countries allied to the Soviet Union would provide opportunities for a more adventurist foreign policy.

The errors committed by the American left in misunderstanding the international implications of the Hungarian events were compounded by failure to grasp the direction of U. S. strategy in the Suez crisis. There were tendencies to accept Eisenhower's opposition to the French and British invasion of Egypt uncritically as a peace move; it was not seen as preparation for the diplomatic and military interference which now threaten the Middle East.

We can look forward to intensified contradictions in American foreign policy, bringing simultaneous efforts toward "peaceful coexistence" and preparations for war with actual conflict in restricted areas. Both tendencies are aspects of the method of power politics.

It seems clear that Dulles and his aides regard peaceful coexistence as a popular term for a re-division of the world into spheres of influence and areas of exploitation. However, this is only one side of the "democratization" of foreign policy advocated by Vice-President Nixon and other "dynamic" leaders. The other and more hopeful side arises from the pressure of democratic forces that exposes fraudulent "democratization" and demands the reality of "peaceful co-existence".

American Marxists can make a distinguished contribution to our country's future by factual, all-sided examination of American policy in a changing world.

Subjective attitudes, resulting in optimistic or pessimistic generalization, or assumptions hastily adopted without the discipline of facts, tend to discredit Marxism and weaken its influence.

5. The Struggle in the United States.

The theory that we are on the threshold of a long period of peace and relaxation of international tensions is the foundation for the belief that we are entering a period of comparatively stable democratic development in the U. S. with a broad sweep of popular forces building an anti-monopoly coalition which (according to the draft Resolution) "would open the way to a vast and unprecedented expansion of democracy", so that "whenever the majority of the American people become convinced of the necessity of a socialist reorganization of society they would be able to advance to their goal along peaceful and constitutional lines".

Marxism is not astrology. Its value does not depend on accurate predictions concerning the distant future, involving all sorts of imponderables that cannot be assessed because the social, economic and cultural conditions which will determine the truth of the prophecy have not yet come into being.

So we can leave the foolish assertion that "the possibility exists for the peaceful and constitutional transition to socialism". We can hope that the possibility will arise in the fulness of time. But to say that it "exists" in the present relationship of forces in the United States is to ignore the class struggles that do exist and are in process of growth and change.

Every aspect of the present situation in the United States indicates intensified and bitter social conflicts.

There are many things in our contemporary life that should stir the pride and hope of Americans. There is a ferment of new ideas and new forces. There is a united labor movement. The struggle of the Negro people for full equality has reached a high and constantly rising level of militancy.

A break-away from the two-party system, and the development of a new party of the people, led by labor and the Negro people in alliance with poor and middle farmers, small business, intellectuals, professionals and important sections of the middle class, is an American necessity. The appearance of such a party is over-due, and there are signs pointing to its early development.

The character of the main elements in this potential coalition will determine the nature of its policies and program, and the relationship of forces in the struggles that will develop around its course of action. The draft Resolution tends to treat the movement of labor and the Negro people and their allies as a more or less "absolute" and undifferentiated process of radicalization of the masses.

It is no light task to define the present and potential relationship of forces within the developing movements of people in the United States. Indeed, the task is so fraught with difficulty that it can be approached only in the most tentative and careful way. We do not criticise the draft Resolution for failure to achieve this task, but rather for its tendency to ignore the problem, and its

presentation of untenable generalizations.

In considering the inner contradictions and struggles that will attend the rise of a coalition that can command the support of a majority of the population, we must weigh the present class relationships, the changes that have taken place in the social composition of the working class, the standard of living, the levels of political consciousness, the ideas and cultural attitudes of the masses.

Further, the movement of people must be examined in relation to the relative power and relative weakness of monopoly capital in the United States. Here again, the contradictions are manifold. The social gains that were fought for in the Roosevelt period have become accepted, permanent features of the American system. These gains have changed the lives of many Americans.

Monopoly capital has been forced to grant these concessions, and to recognize their permanence. This indicates weaknesses in the structure of American power, which relate to the experience of the Roosevelt period, the possibility of an economic breakdown, the crisis of world capitalism, the infirmity of our capitalist allies and the consequent instability of our foreign alliances.

But it is folly to ignore the vast resources that are still at the disposal of American capitalism. Its dominance over the nation's political and economic life is implemented by its unprecedented control of culture and ideology, its influence on wide sections of the working class and on the Negro people and their allies.

The difficulties encountered on the international scene make more imperative to the monopolists that they tighten their political and ideological control of the American people. For this reason, opposition on questions of foreign policy is tolerated only within prescribed limits, and those who venture beyond these limits are reviled as "traitors".

We cannot predict the future course of the grand alliance of labor and the Negro people and their allies which seems destined to emerge. But we can foresee its appearance, because the conditions for it are compellingly present.

The struggle in the United States, here and now, is a conflict between the great monopolists and the majority of the people. The richest country in the world, with the world's highest living standards, is also a land of grinding poverty, depressed rural areas and disease-ridden slums. There is the haunting threat of unemployment, inherent in technological advance, and the imminent danger of economic breakdown.

The present level of trade unions and people's organizations indicates that the developing coalition will have only the most elementary program of struggle against monopoly capital, and its leaders and members will be heavily influenced by capitalist concepts and policies. This is the case at present, it is the reality of existent class relationships and attitudes. A new organizational alignment cannot immediately change these relationships. It can do no more than reflect them more accurately, offer better opportunities for their organized expression, and thus, through experience and struggle, lead to more mature alignments.

The policies of the trade union movement in the United States are not determined solely or in the main by "misleaders of labor" or the lack of democracy in certain trade unions. These are by-products of the historical lag in the development of a politically conscious working class.

We must ask, and eventually answer, many questions concerning the past and present relationship of forces in the American working class: how has it been affected by the comparatively recent entry into industrial employment of millions of workers who come from agricultural areas? What of the relative prosperity of a decisive section of the workers in key industries? What is the influence on the dominant culture on workers as well as on their leaders?

There are many conscientious labor leaders in our country. Marxists have all too frequently judged, or misjudged these leaders, not by their actual integrity or service to their members, but by falsely "advanced" standards. The honesty of a trade union leader need not be called in question because he shares the illusions that affect most of his fellow-countrymen.

Many labor leaders are sincerely dedicated to the cause of peace, a cause which enlists the support of most Americans. But these same leaders, and the people they represent, continue to accept the basic premises of American policy, regarding it as a policy mainly designed to defend our national interests and prevent aggression.

The liberation movement of the Negro people exhibits the contradictions arising from the class relationships among the Negro people and their historic struggle for citizenship. Long, brutal oppression has given them a militant determination to be free at last. The Negro people have a better understanding than other Americans of the colonial peoples of the world.

The highest level of Negro struggle has been attained in the area of maximum oppression, in the deep South, where there is still a predominantly rural Negro population. How is the struggle affected by the recent shift of population to the cities? How does it relate to the continuing desperate poverty of Negro and white sharecroppers? What is the significance of the fact that its leadership is drawn chiefly from the small Negro professional and business class, with the clergy playing a distinguished role?

How do the demands of Negro industrial workers relate to the struggle in the South? To what extent are Negro workers "integrated" in the trade union movement? Will the Negro liberation movement take a leading place in a people's coalition? What stresses and strains will arise in the conflict between the aspirations of the Negro people and the opportunistic and limited approach to Negro-white unity that characterizes sections of the labor movement and its liberal allies?

How will a people's alliance solve the problems arising out of the different levels of consciousness and purpose among its participants? Will the consciousness of the horrors of colonialism on the part of the Negro people be a determining factor in the alliance's views on foreign affairs? How will the class differences and predominantly middle class leadership of the Negro movement affect its relations to labor and its position on social issues?

In posing these questions, we have not touched other aspects of the potential coalition: what will be the role of small and middle farmers, tenant farmers and farm

labor? What part will be played by the foreign-born, and by the Mexican-American people of the Southwest?

What about the shockingly neglected question of the rights of women, their changing status in our society, and the special problems and demands of Negro women?

The exploration of these questions, through contact with people, through assimilation of facts and interpretation of facts, is the road that must be taken by Marxists. There is no short-cut to creative understanding.

The contradictions and conflicts that have delayed the formation of a people's coalition will have to be resolved, at least in part, in order to bring it into being. It seems probable that social democratic ideology and a mildly reformist program will be the means of achieving temporary unity and sufficient breadth to oppose the power of monopoly capital.

Yet social democracy has to be re-examined in terms of a new American and world situation. While the present leadership of labor and its allies exhibits social democratic tendencies, these tendencies have not appeared in strongly organized form in the United States. Social democracy is traditionally related to imperialism, arising from the advantages that accrue to sections of the working class, and to the professional and middle classes, from the profits of colonial exploitation.

These benefits are a factor in the present American economy. But there are other social, economic and political factors which may affect the ideology of a people's coalition and the struggles that will develop within it.

There are many aspects of American history which are in no way duplicated in the past or present experience of other countries. The key role played by the Negro people is one of these historical factors. The strong consciousness of a democratic heritage and love of freedom is another factor.

If we examine the two factors that have just been noted, we are struck by the fundamental contradiction in them. On the one hand, the Negro people have struggled in vain for full freedom through the centuries.

On the other hand, white Americans who most proudly rejoice in the benefits of "liberty" are content to exclude the Negro people from these benefits.

Our history and traditions are not so simple, so "democratic" or so progressive as to enable us to predict a sure course of simple progressive mass activity in the future.

All that the American people have won, and all that they have learned, have been won and learned through bitter struggle. The hardest and most rewarding struggles lie ahead. In these conflicts the maturing consciousness of the people will be steered in struggle.

A concrete program offered by the Communist Party now should serve the immediate needs and aspirations of the people; it should see the needs and aspirations in the light of the struggles that lie before us; and it should uncompromisingly present a socialist solution as the only means of securing life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all Americans.

A concrete program must be based on contact with the people, assimilation of facts and interpretation of facts. This is the road that must be followed by Marxists. There is no short-cut to creative understanding.

"As our case is now, we must think anew and act anew."

6. Culture

During the past 25 years a large number of intellectuals have been attracted to the Communist Party. The vision of a genuinely free society has moved the best and most creative artists, scientists, teachers and thinkers of our time.

But the crass philistinism of party leaders, their lack of respect for culture or cultural workers, have alienated these intellectuals. Those who have attempted to function within the rigid confines of party organization have found themselves prevented from giving their best thought and creative energy to the movement. They have found that their capacity to give anything of value has all too often been measured by the unimaginative standards of bureaucratic organizers.

Cultural leaders, including writers of this paper, cannot avoid responsibility for their participation in these bureaucratic practices. It has sometimes happened that writers or artists who are most devoted to the movement have expressed their dedication by denying their function as artists.

Marxism is a manifestation of culture. It is a world-changing system of ideas. Culture is the heart of the Marxist movement.

It is therefore one-sided, and essentially sectarian, to speak of "culture as a weapon," an instrument serving a movement that has other aims and needs.

People move in terms of ideas which embody their own thought and experience. People think in order to act. Processes of thought, of science and the arts, are a reflection of reality and must be distinguished from the thing reflected. But consciousness is the means of changing the world, and there is no other way of changing it.

The recognition that nature and society are primary and that the mind has no independent existence is itself an achievement of man's consciousness, a giant step into the realm of freedom, where consciousness will control the environment.

In our present social order culture is separated from the "real" business of life. Marxists regard this separation as one of the means by which the class control of society is maintained, the artist and scientist and thinker being deprived of direct contact with the people and harnessed to the service of the dominant class.

The struggle for socialism demands that we proclaim the unity of life and culture so that culture can be renewed from the well-springs of life and living activity can be served by liberated and creative thought.

Resolutions or declarations of the Communist Party significantly ignore culture. However, an occasional paragraph referring to "cultural struggle" can have no value. It would only serve to expose the contradiction between the dogmatic ignorance which treats culture as a side issue and the requirements of a movement which will die if it is not reinvigorated by the strength and vitality of culture.

This is what has happened in the recent experience of the American party. The withdrawal from the party of artists and scientists is not an unimportant phenomenon. It indicates the party's failure to utilize the power of art or the method of science as the core of its life.

Marxism is a social and historical science, demanding the most rigorous study and interpretation of facts. Yet men and women trained in the sciences have rarely been permitted to serve the organization effectively and have almost never participated in leading councils of the party.

In order to function, the scientist must be free to function scientifically. It is similarly true of the artist that his social service lies in his freedom to see and reflect every area of personal and social experience. The depth and sensitivity of the artist's perception is the measure of his usefulness.

The Communist Party should be the most active defender of artistic and scientific freedom. At the same time, it should condemn the lack of freedom which corrupts and destroys artistic and scientific growth in our society.

The artist in our society is corrupted by commercial pressures, by false standards, by his isolation from the main streams of the people's activity. But the artist will not undertake the struggle against the shackles of bourgeois ideology if other shackles are to be placed upon him.

Artists and scientists, like other men and women, are moved by the vision of freedom. The pressures exerted on artists and scientists lead them to understand that freedom is a class question and can be won only by the working people and their allies. The extent to which intellectuals recognize this basic truth will determine the creative power of their work. There is no need to interpose party rules and regulations dictated by leaders who are not competent in the field of culture.

In a sense, the draft resolution is the climax of the party's long neglect of culture. The document deals naively with historical and cultural questions. It generalizes about the American tradition and speaks of "peculiarities" of the American scene. But there is not a word in it indicating knowledge of the American past. It contains no consideration of the development and limitations of the "democratic heritage," the class forces that have shaped it, and the changes in culture that have occurred in the twentieth century.

Let bourgeois historians generalize about the wonders of bourgeois democracy. Let them make racist references to the peculiar sense of freedom inherent in Angle-Saxon character and Angle-Saxon institutions.

It is the task of Marxists to study the realities of American development: the relationship of forces at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, the comparative lack of feudal forms and restrictions in the New World, the existence of vast land holdings, the key significance of Negro slavery in American development, the great expanse of unoccupied land inhabited only by scattered Indian tribes in the West, the conquest of the continent, the rise of trusts and the concentration of economic and political power, the partially successful attempt on the part of the ruling class to de-humanize and corrupt our traditional culture in the epoch of imperialism.

It is impossible to undertake the task of American re-appraisal -- a task which is needed for our country's survival and growth -- without the use of all the disciplines and methods of science, scholarship and the arts. The writer and artist must work closely with the historian and social scientist, studying American culture in its movement and change, in its relationship to the struggles and achievements of the people.

This is the challenging task that faces American Marxists. It is a task that can transform our consciousness -- the people's consciousness -- of the American past, and thus point the way to an American future.

To speak of "an American Road to Socialism" without establishing this historical frame of reference is a mockery of Marxist theory and a denial of its scientific and creative function. The failure to think or feel in terms of our land and its history gives an arid and unreal quality to such documents as the Draft Resolution; it lacks warmth or fire; it fails to touch the language or temper of the people, so it cannot touch their hearts.

Respect for intellectuals, a climate of free discussion and collective effort, an organization in which the artist and scientist and scholar can feel at home because they are at home -- these are the prerequisites for the development of a cultural program -- the soul, the living heart, of a Communist Program for the United States.