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## REVOLT Behind the IRON CURTAIN

1. FOR SOCIALIST FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY
2. WORKERS AND THE TOTALITARIAN MYTH
3. REFORM OR REVOLUTION?
4. TOWARD A REBIRTH OF SOCIALISM
5. THE 'GOMULKA WAY' IN POLAND
6. IMPACT ON THE WEST AND WAR
7. THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH

## REVOLUTION IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE: For Socialist Freedom and Democracy

By GORDON HASKELL

The program of the anti-Communist revolution in Eastern Europe can be summed up in one word: *democracy*. And its content can be summed up in one phrase: *democratic socialism*.

Today this can be asserted not as a hypothesis, a theory or a hope, but as a fact demonstrated and confirmed by every one of the great revolutionary movements which have challenged the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy for the past decade and a half.

The Ukrainian revolutionary movement fought both Hitler and Stalin during the '40s under the slogans of a self-determination and democracy. The East German workers rose in 1953 for an end to Russian rule, and for democracy. These were the fundamental demands of the great revolutions in both Poland and Hungary in 1956.

And by democracy these movements have unmistakably meant the fullest political, social and economic rights and freedoms for all, based on the socialization of the state-owned means of production, and on the right of association of workers, farmers and all other groups in society freed from state or state-party control. In short, not just democracy in general, but democratic socialism.

This is a fact of the greatest significance for our times. For it highlights a truth which has tended to become obscured by the cold-war struggle between the two great war blocs led by Russia and the United States, in which the issue seems to be: *capitalism or Communism*. This truth is that as a social system, capitalism no longer has the vitality to appear as an alternative to the peoples who are struggling for freedom from Stalinism.

True, the propagandists of Communism have tried to make it appear that in Hungary, and even in Poland, the old social order is seeking to re-establish itself under the disguise of democratic slogans. But despite all their talk about the "fascists" in the Hungarian revolution, they have to this day not produced one iota of evidence to point to any significant participation, let alone real influence, of any pro-capitalist elements in the revolution.

### NO ROAD BACK

In countries like Hungary and Poland, with their large numbers of peasants, the demand has been raised for the rights of peasants to own their own land. This demand is raised as against the oppressive super-stafification imposed on the peasantry by the Communist regimes. In the context of the struggle against the new bureaucratic class which has arrogated all power and "ownership" to itself in these countries, it is a perfectly legitimate, democratic demand, and in no way contradicts the struggle for democratic socialism. And above all, it has nowhere and in no way been linked with a demand for a restoration of the property rights

either of large landowners or industrialists.

One of the most telling proofs of the socialist character of the program of the anti-Stalinist revolution is precisely the repudiation by leaders of peasant parties in both Hungary and Poland of any program leading to the restoration of the old order. In Hungary, leaders of the Smallholders Party told foreign correspondents, in the midst of the revolutionary upsurge, not to listen to the voices from abroad of émigrés who spoke in the language of a return to the old regime. Their revolution, they said, is compromised, not aided, by the attempt of such people to appeal to it or to speak its name.

As a matter of fact, to the extent that social forces smacking of the old capitalist order have found their voices in the turmoil of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions, they have appeared not so much as part of the revolutionary democracy, but as an element seeking to promote their own interests in alliance with the bureaucracy. This was most strikingly the case with the Catholic Church hierarchy in Poland.

### THE RULERS FEAR DEMOCRACY

The program and character of the anti-Communist revolution in East Europe is determined, on the one hand, by the needs and aspirations of the workers, farmers and intellectuals who have led and inspired it, and by the character of the regime against which they are revolting. Unless this is understood, the real meaning, for today and for the future, of this revolution, which is a continuing process, can be completely misunderstood.

The basic characteristics of the Communism against which the revolution in Eastern Europe are directed are these: bureaucratic state ownership, control and direction of all means of production and exchange; control and direction by the party-state-industrial bureaucracy of all economic, social and political forms of activity; ruthless suppression of all independence from as well as opposition to the party which acts as the executive committee of the bureaucracy as a whole; monopoly control by the party-state bureaucracy over all forms of education, public expression, culture and the like.

In short, except when shaken by the disaffection and struggle of the people, it is a totalitarian society controlled by a small minority of bureaucrats.

This totalitarian society, however, had

been created as a result of the complete destruction of the capitalist social order which had preceded it in Eastern Europe. Unlike fascism, which is a totalitarian system based on the continuation of capitalist property forms and relations, Russian Communism and its satellite regimes had destroyed capitalism root and branch.

In Russia, capitalism had been originally overturned by a workers' revolution which sought to lay the foundations of a socialist society. Due to the backwardness of the country and the failure of the working class in Western Europe to come to the aid of the struggling Soviet regime, the power was gradually wrested from the hands of the working class by the rising new bureaucracy under Stalin, which eventually stifled all democracy, exterminated all opposition, and gathered into its hands the political and hence the economic control of the country.

In Eastern Europe, this bureaucracy, now fully developed and differentiated in Russia as a new ruling class, imposed its form of stultified, bureaucratized society. It destroyed capitalist relations and rule only to impose its own rule and that of puppet regimes created in its own image, in their stead.

This bureaucracy rules not by virtue of the private ownership of land or means of production by individual bureaucrats. It rules, rather, through its collective monopoly of political power which, in a state-owned economy gives it monopoly of economic power as well. Thus the bureaucracy recognizes very clearly that the establishment of democracy in "their" society means the end of their rule.

### PROGRAM OF REVOLT

The Polish and Hungarian revolutions have now made it clear that this is also recognized by the workers who live under the bureaucratic yoke. After ten years of Communist rule in Eastern Europe, they have seen through the fraud which claims that the rule of the Communist Party and of the party-state-industrial bureaucracy is really the rule of the workers or of the "people." That is why, both in Hungary and Poland though the ferment first became most noticeable among the students and intellectuals, the workers gave the revolution its real mass, backbone and drive.

The program of the anti-Communist revolution has so far reached its fullest expression and development in Hungary because it was there that the bureaucracy lost all control over the revolutionary process. Here are the most vital portions of the 16-point program presented to mass meetings in Budapest on October 23 which triggered off the revolution:

"Revision of Hungary's relations with the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to establish complete economic and political

equality and non-interference in each others' affairs.

"The calling of a Communist Party congress to elect a new leadership.

"A reshuffling of the government with Nagy as leader.

"A secret general election with more than one party.

"The reorganization of Hungary's economy based on her actual national resources.

"Revision of the workers' output norms and recognition of the workers' right to strike.

"Revision of the system of compulsory farm collections.

"Equal rights for individual farmers and members of farm cooperatives.

"Complete freedom of speech and of the press.

"Revision of all political trials.

"Release of all political prisoners, including those who are still held in the Soviet Union."

### FIRM FOR SOCIALISM

It would be possible to fill this whole page with quotations from the leaflets, programs, newspapers and radio broadcasts of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions which proclaim democratic socialism as their goal and full democracy in every sphere of life as their program.

Here are just a few random examples from Hungary:

*Appeal of the Revolutionary University Students Committee, October 31:*

"We want neither Stalinism nor capitalism. We want a truly democratic and truly Socialist Hungary, completely independent from any other country."

*Speech by Ferenc Farkas, national secretary of the National Peasant Party, November 3:*

"The government will retain from the Socialist achievements and results everything which can be, and must be, used in a free, democratic and socialist country, in accordance with the wishes of the people."

*Resolution adopted by the Workers Councils of the 11th District of Budapest, November 12:*

Point One "We wish to emphasize that the revolutionary working class considers the factories and the land the property of the working people."

And so it went. Quotation could be piled on quotation. But even more important than what the revolution in Hungary said was what they did.

The workers, students and peasants proceeded from the first days of the revolution to establish their own democratic councils, completely free and independent of government or party control. These councils sought to take over the political and economic administration of the country on the basis of democracy.

Even though the Hungarian Revolution was permitted to develop freely for only a few days before Russian tanks

(Continued on page 4)

## 2 A Lesson of the Revolution

# The Working Class vs. The Totalitarian Myth

By MAX MARTIN

The Hungarian Revolution, temporarily defeated by Russian military force, has nonetheless already accomplished outstanding wonders and recorded magnificent victories, and that by virtue of its occurrence alone.

It has dealt shattering blows to Stalinist barbarism as a world system, erecting a mighty barrier to Russian and international Stalinist aspirations to global domination.

It has produced important ideological repercussions, indeed a veritable revolution in the realm of ideas, which has begun to reflect itself materially among all social classes and forces, and which in the future will do so on an even vaster scale.

First and foremost, the struggle of the Hungarian people for democracy and socialism has virtually destroyed the myth of Russian and totalitarian invincibility.

The significance of this result can best be comprehended by contrasting the appearance of Stalinism today with the picture it presented some ten years ago.

Russia was completing its construction of a new empire in Eastern Europe then, doing so at a time when the old empires were going under. A Russian grab for all of Europe seemed possible and, in the eyes of some, likely. Mass Communist Parties grew in Western Europe; the hold of Stalinist ideology on millions of workers seemed secure. Likewise, the complete triumph of Stalinism over the Asian masses appeared a distinct possibility.

Capitalism on a world scale showed itself to be on the decline and the working-class struggle for socialist democracy seemed impotent, while Stalinism grew in power and influence.

In these circumstances, gloom about the future of democracy and socialism was widespread. Stalinism appeared to be stable and permanent. Many people came to believe that history held "1984" in store for humanity.

But the workers of Csepel, the students of Budapest University, the intellectuals of the Petofi Circle, the whole oppressed Hungarian nation, has risen to put an end to all that.

The poisonous myth of Stalinist invincibility has during the past period wreaked havoc in the socialist and labor movements, causing many to desert the struggle for socialism. The mass socialist and labor parties of Western Europe have lined themselves up behind capitalist imperialism, in good part, on the basis of the rationale that only NATO and the H-bomb could prevent the triumph of the Stalinist danger to humanity. In this country, the unions support Washington's bipartisan reactionary foreign policy and do not counterpose to it the alternative of a genuinely democratic and progressive international program.

But now, since Hungary, an independent working-class line becomes possible.

### EXPLODED THEORY

Behind the pessimist myth lay this thought: *The people living under Stalinism can do nothing to liberate themselves; totalitarianism is internally indestructible. Under its brutal sway no opposition can manifest itself and no organization for its overthrow can take place. Above all, the working-class fight for socialist emancipation is precluded. Moreover, the Stalinist monolith has a dynamism whose onslaught cannot be resisted by the peoples not yet its captives. Only the military might of the West can prevent the enslavement of the world, and it alone retains the possibility of promising eventual liberation for the peoples already under the heel of Stalinism.*

One intellectual expression of these moods was to be found in Hannah Arendt's theories of totalitarianism. In Arendt's view, the rise of totalitarianism puts an end to the divisions of society into antagonistic social classes with their clashing social interests. The motor forces for social change and development present in non-totalitarian society disappear, as the class structure of society is replaced by an atomized, structureless, declassified, irrationally manipulated mass of people. This mass, the theory runs, is composed of innumerable fragments incapable of social cohesion and therefore completely unable to revolt.

For Arendt, modern totalitarianism has outmoded the classical Marxist analysis of social and political structure. One's economic position or one's relationship to others in the process of production loses most or all relevance to one's role in society. Thus there can be no common interest based on class position, nor any consciousness of that common interest, leading to solidarity and cohesion, nor can there be rational political goals as the ends of group action. Society is composed of a ruling elite and an amorphous mass of individuals; the mass is either in a state of mystique-dominated conformism or hopeless depression.

After Hungary, it is hard to remember that Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was much admired some five years ago; that her theories were regarded as the latest word in sociological sagacity, much superior to the outdated class analysis of Marxism still retained by a few "socialist dreamers."

For the Hungarian Revolution, like the October Days in Poland, conformed not to the discoveries of Arendt but precisely to the Marxian and socialist analysis of Stalinism.

### HUNGARIAN PATTERN

On October 21 and 22 student groups met in Budapest and adopted a political program expressing their demands on the regime: not mobs of isolated individuals, but cohesive assemblages of persons belonging to a social group, and conscious of their common needs.

They called for an end to restrictions on their intellectual and academic life, and simultaneously developed a program in the interests of the entire nation, in keeping with their status as students and intellectuals: withdrawal of Russian troops, for free elections, for the right to strike, for revision of the workers' production norms, for revision of compulsory collective farm collections, etc.

They organized demonstrations for the next day, sending delegations to the factories to achieve unity with the workers. The workers of Csepel went on the offensive; they proceeded to the army barracks, came to an agreement with the soldiers, and obtained arms from them.

Everywhere there was disciplined cohesive action; organization sprang up; programs were formulated in terms of class interest and expressed the rational political goals of the different classes and groups and of the nation as a whole.

The very institutions created by the totalitarian society and regime, which, according to the dim view of those who regard Stalinism as the "wave of the future," will more or less eternally manipulate the "irrational mass," became the arenas in which the revolution was organized and prepared for—including the ruling Communist Party itself. It was proved that behind the totalitarian façade, beneath the monolithic veneer, social conflict and class struggle go on, expressing themselves in whatever structures and organizations exist.

Moreover, once the revolution was successful—as it was during the tragically few days from October 28 to November 4 in Hungary—social and political life flowered again. *Class, social group, party, faction*: all of the old divisions and organizations in society, whose elimination totalitarianism was supposed to have accomplished long ago, reappeared, vigorous and flourishing. The old Social-Democratic Party was reorganized; likewise the peasant parties, and many others. Mass meetings were held, newspapers founded, debate and discussion took place.

Social and political life reassured itself, proving that it had existed all the time; obscured by the totalitarian structure of the state and society perhaps, but existing nevertheless; for the totalitarian Stalinist society is a class society—different from other class societies, of course, from capitalism for example—but sharing with other class societies that which is common to all exploitive, class-based systems of social production and organization.

One thing which is common is the crucial fact that the conditions of existence for the masses in an exploitive, disharmonious, class-ridden society cause the oppressed to struggle against those very conditions of existence, and create the means whereby such struggle can occur. And in our day the inevitable tendency of such struggle is toward the creation of that harmonious society in which all classes, class distinctions, class division and the exploitation of man by man will disappear: socialism.

### ROLE OF THE WORKERS

But if the Hungarian Revolution has struck shattering blows at the myth of totalitarian invincibility and confirmed the Marxist analysis of Stalinism as a class society in general, it has also demonstrated once again the socialist view of the key role of the working class in the struggle against all oppression and as the bearer of the socialist emancipation of society. The Hungarian workers have made clear that they, and they alone, can lead all of the oppressed in the fight to establish socialist democracy, and that it is in reality possible for them to do so.

The socialist assessment of the role of the workers, it must be borne in mind, bases itself not on some "religious worship" of workers, nor on the idea that working people as individuals contain some inherent superior virtues lacked by others, as both ignorant and malicious critics of Marxism "explain," but on the objective facts of working-class life:

In modern society, whether capitalist or bureaucratic-collectivist, they are the chief victims of class oppression. The circumstances in which they live force them to

combat this oppression. They constitute a basic urban class in societies where cities are the centers of social and political life and power; the very process of capitalist or bureaucratic-collectivist production organizes them in the factories, producing social cohesion and solidarity among them. As a result of the modern production process huge masses of workers can be mobilized quickly; their role in production enables them to paralyze society at will, and also to take command of society at will. In the advanced industrialized nations which dominate the world they represent the clear and overwhelming majority of the population; and finally, the realization of their aspirations does not require the establishment of a new ruling class and a new tyranny, but on the contrary, is directed toward the abolition of all class oppression and all tyranny.

The students of Budapest who began the Hungarian Revolution knew this, as their action in reaching out for contact and unity with the working people, the young workers in particular, conclusively showed. As a result of the systematic selection imposed by the regime itself, the students were overwhelmingly working-class in parentage, themselves. They realized—with what exact degree of theoretical clarity it is not of course possible to know—that while they might formulate the revolution's program and might even initiate the actual uprising, the working men and women would have to provide the bulk of the combat forces, and act as the main organizer and leader of the struggle.

Their expectations were not disappointed: the response of the workers proved them and the theories of scientific socialism right.

In Poland the workers, armed and in possession of the factories, won Gomulka his victory, administered a defeat to the Natolin pro-Russian faction of the Communist Party, and convinced the Russians not to intervene. In Hungary, the working masses, organized in their class organizations, the newly formed Workers' Councils, accounted for the bulk of the actual military struggle in the streets, in the October 24-28 period which was ended by the withdrawal of Russian troops from Budapest and the capitulation of Nagy to the revolution, and also during the week following the November 4 reintervention of the Russian army.

To back up the actual military operations, the workers in Budapest declared a general strike, and were followed in this by the workers in all other industrial centers of the country. Their strike action paralyzed all social life in the country, proved that the Kadar regime could not last for a single moment without the presence of Russian tanks, and, before the second Russian attack, made the revolution master of Hungary. And even after the Russians had reimposed their military rule in the middle of November, the workers continued the general strike for weeks and weeks, in a tremendous display of heroism, solidarity and determination to fight against the anti-working-class dictatorship which Stalinism is.

### THE FACE OF THE FUTURE

As in all revolutions in modern times, the workers created councils as their organs of struggle during the revolution. In "Red" Csepel, near Budapest; in Miskolc, heart of the mining region of Borsod; in Debreczen, Szeged, Győr, Magyaróvár; in every industrial center of Hungary, Workers Councils were organized. These bodies, under the democratic control of the workers themselves, rooted in the sites of working-class life—the points of production—at once became the leaders of military struggle and of social life, in cooperation with the other organized revolutionary forces.

They organized the demonstrations against the regime and fought against the Russian troops in the early part of the revolution and led the resistance to the reimposition of Russian military rule later on. They, together with the representatives of the students, soldiers and new political parties, maintained order in the cities, and carried out all necessary social functions.

They arranged for contact with the peasantry and the feeding of the city populations. They organized and conducted production in the factories on the days and in the places where the decision was to work, and prevented it where and when the decision was to strike. In so doing, they demonstrated the socialist view that the workers, and they alone, are the class essential for the production of the necessities of life, and that the "services" of ruling classes can be dispensed with.

Both in deed and in word—the latter in the form of the countless manifestos, proclamations and programs adopted and published or broadcast by the various Workers Councils, Revolutionary Committees, etc.—they explicitly announced their intention of seeing to it that these class organs of the working people not only organized the revolution against Stalinism but remained on afterwards, both as instruments of workers' control in the factories and as organs of working-class leadership in the democratic rule by the people which would result from the revolution.

The Hungarian Revolution proved that socialist freedom, not "1984," is the wave of the future.

### BOOKS ARE WEAPONS

The Communist Party at the Crossroads, by H. W. Benson .....	.25
The New Course, & The Struggle for the New Course, by Leon Trotsky and Max Shachtman .....	1.50
Stalinist Russia, by Tony Cliff .....	2.00
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**3 No Illusions About 'Democratization'**

# Reform or Revolution In East Europe?

By SAM TAYLOR

A totalitarian or despotic society is one in the midst of a deep-seated social crisis. Totalitarianism is needed when it is impossible to rule with the consent of the people.

While such a regime presents a picture of monolithic unity, beneath the surface are the severest conflicts and suppressed class struggles. Or else why the need for repression?

But to rule in this manner is extremely expensive in the social sense. It necessitates a tremendous bureaucratic apparatus which is at best a drain upon the economy; it is an expensive way to run the affairs of the society and in the case of Stalinism which also runs the economy, it has proved to involve fantastic waste and inefficiency.

While Nazi totalitarianism grew up on the basis of a decaying capitalism, the Stalinist bureaucracy grew out of the degeneration of the Russian revolution. It was the manifestation of the degeneration as well as one of the contributing causes of the degeneration. Given the isolation of the Russian Revolution after the failure of the socialist revolutions in any one of the advanced industrial nations in Western Europe, and the social exhaustion of Russia itself after the long years of the civil war, the stage was set for the victory of the Stalinist bureaucracy under the slogan of "building socialism in one country."

But to industrialize Russia, given the narrow economic base which was the heritage of the Russian working class, would have been difficult on a capitalist basis. To attempt to do it in this Russia on a socialist basis was impossible. Once the hothouse rate of industrialization was decided upon, it was inevitable that extreme measures of repression were needed in order to squeeze the surplus production out of the working class and the peasantry and to put it into building industry.

The frenzied attempt to industrialize meant suppression of the living standards of the Russian people. And to suppress the economic well-being of the people meant that the Stalinist bureaucracy has to suppress their right to protest or to advocate a different policy.

The political consequences of this policy are well documented and acknowledged. They were verified by the highest authority in Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th Party Congress. Russia is a totalitarian society based on collective property where all democratic rights have been suppressed. "It was governed by the methods of an oriental despotism rather than of a modern civilized society," now admit the editors of the magazine *Monthly Review*.

### SCARCITY AND BUREAUCRACY

If the cause of the bureaucracy's rule is to be found in the economic backwardness and general scarcity, and exacerbated by the drive to accumulate the means of production, then what happens once the Russian economy rises to a higher level? What is the social "justification" of the bureaucracy once there is the basis for a more equitable or equalitarian distribution of the still scarce, although more plentiful, consumption goods?

Now that Russia has passed through the first stages of industrialization, to the point where it is the second most powerful industrial nation, should not the bureaucratic privileges and social differences which grew out of the less industrialized society now prove to be superfluous and even a barrier to further economic advancement?

Considering the existence of the Stalinist bureaucracy in this way, a whole school of thought has arisen, best typified by Isaac Deutscher, which proclaims that "de-Stalinization has become a social necessity." But they also maintain more than this: they maintain that the bureaucracy itself recognizes the conflict between the old Stalinist method of rule

and the actual and potential needs of the Russian economy, and that the bureaucracy itself is capable of "an astonishingly intense reformist initiative" and of abolishing the Stalinist political superstructure. This means introducing socialist democracy if it is to have any meaning at all.

It is not a question whether the sociological generalizations about the relationship of industrialization and social progress are true. For the most part they are, but one does not automatically follow from the other.

At issue is the dynamic of the unrest and "reforms." Those, like Deutscher, who are for "reform from above" see the dynamic in the bureaucracy: Khrushchev understands the contradiction in Stalinism and he is trying to dismantle the Stalinist system itself. But the actions of the Stalinist bureaucracy in reality, are the reactions to the pressures from below, from the Russian and satellite peoples and even from the ranks of the lower sections of the bureaucracy. Khrushchev is reacting to the rising discontent — East Berlin, Vorkuta, Tiflis, Poznan, Hungary and the student unrest in Russia itself—in an attempt to head it off by a series of "reforms," while at the same time preserving the Stalinist totalitarian system.

### SELF-REFORM?

The question is not whether the Stalinist bureaucracy can curb some of the excesses of Stalin's despotic rule, for there is no theoretical or practical reason why it cannot, and to a certain extent it has done so. It is not even a question of whether a ruling class, even a totalitarian one, can give up some of its privileges in order to preserve the bases of its own rule. Nor is it merely a question of whether certain "reforms" can be introduced. The Titoist bureaucracy in Yugoslavia has gone a long way toward demonstrating that many "reforms" can be introduced.

At issue is whether the Stalinist ruling bureaucracy, whether or not it is designated a ruling class, can dismantle its own rule and introduce democracy in the real sense of free speech, free press, the right to form political organizations of the people's own choosing such as political parties and free trade unions.

If genuine democracy is not achieved, or at least a significant and real start made toward achieving it, then there can be no question but that the essentials of the old system remain. Here again the Tito example is instructive since almost everyone agrees that there are indeed differences between the Yugoslav and Russian regimes.

In Yugoslavia there were no bloody and extensive purge trials such as the Moscow trials of the 1930s, no bloody forced collectivization of agriculture, no increasingly draconic labor laws, no slave-labor camps on the scale of the Russian camps. And yet the social system of the two countries is the same—bureaucratic collectivism—and the political regimes are totalitarian.

A few years ago in radical and socialist circles it was fashionable to point to the "liberalization" and "reforms" of the Tito regime as Tito took steps or made gestures toward removing or modifying many of the most objectionable features of the regime in the course of the life-and-death struggle with Russia. It was an attempt to win mass support as against Moscow's pressure and to stabilize the bureaucracy's rule. But on the decisive and all-important criterion of political democracy—the right to political dissent—no concessions were made.

No oppositional political parties could be formed and no oppositional voice was permitted in the party and the bureaucracy continues to rule supreme. If there was any question of this, then the arrest and imprisonment of Milovan Djilas for merely writing an article (which did not even appear in Yugoslavia but only in a foreign magazine) should have settled it.

This then is the limit of "reforms" or "liberalization" under a Stalinist regime: nothing will be permitted which challenges the political, and therefore social, rule of the totalitarian bureaucracy.

By Stalinism is meant a social system, and not merely particular characteristics and "aberrations" embodied by Stalin as an individual. Khrushchev, in his now famous speech, pointed to all the particular excesses of Stalin's personal dictatorial rule, even over the bureaucracy itself, which the bureaucracy as a whole found to be a deterrent to its rule and to the personal security of the bureaucrats themselves. Titoism is the living example that many of the excesses can be eliminated without changing the nature of the social system.

The specific characteristic of this bureaucracy as differentiated from the fascist bureaucracy is that its rule is based on state (nationalized) property. In a society where the means of production are nationalized, that group which has political power (which "owns" the state) has social power, and this determines the social relations. Under Stalinism, this group is the bureaucracy and not the working class. Its social power, the means whereby it continues to occupy its position of privilege and power, rests upon its monopoly of political power. Anything which shifts political power from the hands of the bureaucracy to the people, i.e., introduces democracy, undermines the social power and existence of the bureaucracy as the ruling group.

Democracy is a life-and-death issue for the Stalinist bureaucracy. The iron law of this bureaucracy is that its rule depends on the absence of democracy. Therefore any real democratic reform does not mean merely a political change but involves socio-economic changes; so that the establishment of political democracy in Russia, far from being merely a desirable but dispensable embellishment to "socialism," actually means a basic shift in social power from the bureaucracy to the working class—that is, a social revolution.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

If those who speak freely about "democratization" and "reforms" in Russia do not understand this fundamental fact, it is not lost on the Stalinist bureaucracy. Within several weeks after the 20th Congress, the Russian press began to denounce the "rotten elements" who were going outside of the bounds of constructive criticism. An editorial in *Pravda* on July 6 attempted to put the lid down on the discussion which followed the downgrading of Stalin: "As for our country, the Communist Party has been and will be the only master of the minds, and thoughts, the spokesman, leader and organizer of the people in their entire struggle for communism."

Another voice which spoke out in support of the Deutscherite theory of "reform from above" was the *Monthly Review*. But the Sweezyites, who are firm ideological Stalinists and never pretended to believe in the basic need for democracy under socialism, caution their readers not to go overboard:

"... at this stage of the game we would be wrong to expect more from de-Stalinization than the abolition or rectification of methods which were most obviously in conflict with the present needs and attitudes of the Soviet people. We may expect an end of arbitrary police rule, but certainly not an end of the secret police. We may expect an end to the frame-up, but not an end to the conception of political crime. We may expect an end to the deliberate falsification of history, but

not an end to the party-line interpretation of history. The Stalin cult is dead, but not the Lenin cult. Above all, there is no ground for expecting an abandonment of the one-party state or any abdication of its monopoly of leadership by the Communist Party. . . . All this may sound disappointing to people who have been reading the news out of Moscow as indicating the beginning of a sweeping democratization. But the truth is that there have never been any solid grounds for such extravagant expectations. The Soviet dictatorship is cleaning house, not abolishing itself." (Italics added.)

If there is no solid ground for believing that even the beginning of a sweeping democratization is taking place, then what happens to the entire Deutscher theory with which *Monthly Review* expresses such complete agreement? For their part they see democratization occurring as a "slow process" during which time the "Soviet public will rise far above the highest capitalist level in both knowledge and culture, and when that time comes genuine socialist democracy will become not only possible but inevitable."

What is seen here is the combination of a reformist ideology with pro-Stalinism. Isaac Deutscher expresses this reformist conception of social change: "Only when the gap in the political consciousness of the Soviet masses and of the Soviet intelligentsia has been eliminated can de-Stalinization be brought to that ultimate conclusion to which Stalin's epigones can hardly carry it."

The factor holding back the expression of democracy is not the murderous hand of the Stalinist bureaucracy but the lack of knowledge, culture and political consciousness on the part of the people. The bureaucracy is merely the caretaker of the "socialist" social system until the people are mature enough (in the bureaucracy's and its apologists' opinion) to assume control of their own destiny.

The question whether it is possible to have "reform" from above handed down by the bureaucracy, or whether it is necessary to have "revolution" from below, is not one that need be considered merely in the abstract. This question has a long history in the socialist movement for, in general, it divided those who believed that socialism could be handed down to the working class by a series of legislative reforms without the active participation of the working class—that is, without a working-class political party winning power—from those who believed that socialism could be achieved only through a thoroughgoing transformation carried through by the working class itself after a basic change in class power.

The difference is not between those who want to go fast as against those who want to go slow. In the last analysis it became a difference in the goal, although it was not seen at the time.

The dispute was not decided in advance and in the abstract. The verification came in the course of action. During the First World War the test was the support of one's own ruling class in the slaughter.

The test of reform or revolution in respect to Stalinism also can only be decided in practice. And here the test is the Hungarian Revolution. Pro-Stalinists have therefore proceeded to slander the fight of the Hungarian people for freedom, and decry it as going "too far."

The Hungarian people were demanding the complete democratization of the Stalinist regime, something which the Deutscherite "reformers" are also for, presumably. But in practice the "reform from above" advocates are not for the same goal—the thorough democratization of the regime. For events showed that this goal demanded revolutionary means.

This is the 8th of LABOR ACTION'S series of annual pamphlet-issues on basic questions of socialism. Our regular articles and features will be back next week as usual, including the YOUNG SOCIALIST CHALLENGE which appears every week as a section of LA.

The following pamphlet-issues are still available at 10 cents each:

- (1) THE PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAM OF INDEPENDENT SOCIALISM.
- (4) SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY.
- (5) WHAT IS STALINISM?
- (6) SOCIALISM AND THE WORKING CLASS.
- (7) LABOR POLITICS IN AMERICA—THE CASE FOR A LABOR PARTY.

Also: BEHIND YALTA—THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

# 4 A New Socialist Movement Can Now Be Built TOWARD A REBIRTH OF SOCIALISM

By MAX SHACHTMAN

The crisis of Stalinism has opened the way for a regroupment and reunification of the socialist movement, especially in the United States.

For almost a quarter of a century, American radicalism, and even liberalism, was predominantly under the leadership or influence of Stalinism, whether it appeared under the name of the Communist Party or the Communist Political Association (as it was renamed for a short time). During this period, the Stalinists succeeded not only in overcoming the stagnation and factional exhaustion of the twenties, but in establishing themselves as the largest, most influential and most important political movement proclaiming the goal of socialism since the high point reached by the traditional American Socialist Party at the time the country entered the First World War.

The Communist Party became an authentic mass movement. Tens of thousands of workers who became socialists joined its ranks or consistently followed its political leadership. Negroes, both workers and intellectuals, joined or supported it in greater number than ever before in the history of the American radical movement. It became the predominant force among intellectuals; among students responding to the appeal of progressive social ideas; among professional people attracted to its aims and struggles.

In the trade unions, especially in the CIO, the Communist Party acquired positions of leadership and power it could only dream of in its early days; for if it is true that it was "used" by such non-socialist labor leaders as John L. Lewis, Philip Murray and Sidney Hillman, it is no less true that it took ample advantage for its own progress of the use to which they put it.

For a time, the Communist Party even

succeeded in extending its influence—the full dimensions of which future revelations alone will measure—in important sections of the Democratic Party, a feat as unrivaled as it was dubious for a movement calling itself socialist.

In the same period, running roughly from the early days of the crisis that ushered in the thirties to the beginning of the cold war, the Communist Party also succeeded in reducing to virtual impotence, or thwarting the further development of, all other radical groups.

## SP'S EXPERIENCE

It is true that the formerly paralyzed Socialist Party also acquired new strength and a more radical aspect for a little while. New, young, more aggressive elements by the thousands swelled its ranks, despite a factional conflict which led to the splitting off of the right wing of the party. But this promising growth came to a short end.

The Socialist Party was drained off in several directions. Its new leadership, the "Militant" group, was not only incapable of stemming the drain—it contributed to it in almost every possible way. One part of the party membership and leadership was absorbed into the vast machinery of the New Deal, where it quickly forgot its socialism and hoped everybody else would, too. Another part lost itself, and its ideals and politics, in the ranks of the trade-union officialdom.

## For Socialism and Democracy —

(Continued from page 1)

crushed it, it was clear that every political tendency in the country was permitted the freest self-expression and organization as a matter of course. Again and again the program of the revolution, voiced through a hundred separate, uncoordinated, spontaneous democratic bodies rang out clearly: for "more than one party," for the freedom of all parties accepting socialist economic foundations for the country. Though the revolutionary democracy spelled the end of Communist Party rule, the right of this party to participate in the political life of the country, not as monolithic ruler but as one political tendency among many, was recognized.

It was precisely because the Hungarian Revolution stood so clearly for democratic socialism that the Russian rulers decided to crush it so ruthlessly. And it was for this reason, too, that they spread the slander that this revolution was really brought about and controlled by "fascist elements," or by "American agents."

## OLD FORMULA IS GONE

The Russian rulers recognize more clearly than anyone else that their social rule depends on the extermination of all popular independence, of all democracy. They recognized that with Poland already on the brink of a democratic revolution, and with uneasiness, ferment and rebellion just under the surface throughout their satellite empire and in their own country, a successful democratic revolution in Hungary might be just the spark which would ignite the powder-keg on which they are sitting.

Similarly, they know that throughout their empire there is no popular desire for a return to capitalism. For twenty years they have been able to maintain their power, in part at least, by convincing their people that all who oppose them are actually seeking a restoration of

capitalist rule. This is why it was not enough for them to imprison or execute every opponent or potential opponent of their regime. In addition, they sought to smear their opponents, preferably by forced "confessions," with plotting to "restore capitalism," usually as agents of some foreign power.

In the case of Hungary, the old formula was trotted out once more. This most democratic and socialist of all revolutions was and continues to be slandered as a "fascist plot." But the old magic has gone from the formula.

In Russia and throughout the world, the real nature of the "confession" trials was exposed by Khrushchev's attack on Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, and by the rehabilitation of hundreds of victims of such trials throughout the Russian empire. Over and above this, the Hungarian revolution was a public event of such gigantic stature, that those throughout the Communist world movement who continue to mumble the formula no longer believe it themselves, and can get no one to lend them ear.

The heroism of the Hungarian Revolution will live in the hearts of free men and women for all time. Its program, hammered out in the fire and turmoil of revolution and counter-revolution by a whole people, will point the way, not to distant generations, but to this generation which is engaged in the struggle to overthrow Stalinism and establish democracy. It can serve also as a rallying-ground and inspiration to the working class and the peoples of the capitalist world who have so long been disoriented by the idea that Stalinism was the only realistic alternative to some form of continued capitalist rule.

Democracy — democratic socialism — that is the real alternative to both Communism and capitalism. This is the inspiring, historic message of the program of the anti-Stalinist revolution.

Still another part compromised itself with Stalinism.

Another element, remaining true to its socialist convictions, joined with the Trotskyists who had entered the Socialist Party in 1936 and stayed with them in the subsequent split which further disarrayed the SP without giving a significant impetus to the again independent Trotskyist movement.

Despair, deepened by defections of many remaining members into the political void, cut the Socialist Party to ineffectuality. The main wave of radicalism continued to flow into the channels of the Communist Party.

## TROTSKYIST FAILURE

As for the Trotskyist movement, the only other socialist group of consequence to challenge Stalinism in the country, it never really succeeded in advancing beyond the stage of a propagandist organization, in spite of more than one encouraging phase in its development. The sectarian tendencies and other vices inherent in the life of all propagandist groups — which threatened to dessicate it when its distinguishing theories become dogmas that separate and alienate it from living movements and struggles — gradually gained the upper hand in its midst.

It dealt itself a cruel blow when it expelled half its membership upon the outbreak of the Second World War because the expelled refused to defend Russia. Its ranks thereafter were repeatedly decimated by other expulsions and splits.

In consolation for a declining membership and influence, it substituted a messianic doctrine that it was innately and irrevocably endowed with predestined leadership of the American working class.

And when, in addition to this, it consecrated the new dogma that Stalinism is part—a counterrevolutionary and bureaucratic part, but nevertheless a part — of the camp of socialist revolution, at least from the River Spree to the Sea of Japan, it succeeded at once in unutterably muddling its remaining ranks, in shutting itself off from the labor movement and from all socialists, and in excluding the possibility of influencing dissident Stalinists.

We, organized first into the Workers Party and now into the Independent Socialist League, have not, in the seventeen years of our independent existence, been free, nor could we be free, of the vicissitudes and even vices that assail propagandist groups like our own. But we have more and more consciously sought not only to examine and re-examine our past as objectively as we could, but to gain the greatest possible awareness of our problems and our role.

We have stood all along, as we stand today, for such a program and such a political course for the socialist movement all over the world as would identify it unmistakably with a socialist alternative to outlived capitalism and a democratic alternative to the spurious "socialism" of totalitarian Stalinism, not as two marked-off and separated conceptions but as a harmonious whole applied concretely to different conditions.

## BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

Ours is the position of Third Camp socialists, of independent socialists who find it no less disastrous to the interests of the working classes to support capitalism in the struggle against Stalinism than to support Stalinism in the struggle against capitalism; ours is the position of consistent and uncompromising democratic socialism.

But between our own adoption of this conception and its adoption by a broad and influential socialist movement, to say nothing of the very broadest masses of the workers, there is a great gap. It cannot be bridged by imagining that it does not exist, or that it can be wished away by self-agitation or by decree or by disdainful ultimatums to all those who are unprepared to see eye-to-eye with us on

every theoretical or political question. We have understood for some time that we are not, certainly not yet, the socialist movement (as distinguished from a socialist propaganda group), and that is the principal reason why we ceased some time ago even to call ourselves a party.

But we have been confidently convinced for a long time that just as an independent political party formed by the present organizations of the workers, the trade unions, will be impelled naturally and logically by forces of the class struggle, which do not need to be invented any more than they can be forever repressed, to adopt socialist aims and methods no matter how primitive and non-socialist such a party may be at the start—so an authentic and broad socialist movement, no matter how moderate its program and leadership may be at the start, no matter what its disagreements with our own views, will be impelled by the same mighty and inexorable forces to accept these views—unless events prove them, to us as well, to be erroneous and untenable—not by means of low maneuvers, factional chicanery or manipulations, but of free, loyal, comradely and democratic interchange of opinion.

We have also understood that both from the standpoint of the development of a declaration of political independence of the American working class—the formation of a Labor Party or what may turn out to be the particular American equivalent to it—and of the development of an influential movement that serves as the socialist wing of the inclusive political party of the workers, it is first of all imperative to divorce the concepts of Stalinism and socialism in the minds of the American people.

## THE CURSE OF STALINISM

All the means of influencing thought at the disposal of the American capitalist class, and on the other side, the by-no-means trifling propagandist means of Stalinism, have cooperated to this extent: both have sought, with tremendous success in the past, to identify Stalinism with socialism and socialism with Stalinism.

It is this identification that has cost the socialist movement its heaviest losses, above all in this country, and that has been one of the greatest barriers, if not the greatest barrier, to its progress. For to place the responsibility for our weakness upon the "prosperity" is one-sided, false, and highly misleading.

The "prosperity" undoubtedly accounts for the fact that the socialist movement in this country is not as powerful as it is, let us say, in Great Britain. It cannot and does not account for its utter fragmentation and political impotence.

That condition is explained primarily by the fact that socialism, the socialist movement, was identified for decades with Stalinism, and that Stalinism has been identified for the past few years (that is, almost precisely since the beginning of the disastrous decline of the Communist Party as the overwhelmingly dominant "socialist" movement in this country) with the worst totalitarian despotism, with the crudest denial of democratic rights, of any modern country on earth.

And if there is one view, among all those we hold, that we consider as un-faillingly demonstrated, it is this: an authentic socialist movement cannot and will not and should not be developed in this country until it has freed itself completely, both in reality and in the minds of the people of this country, from the incubus of Stalinism and from all attachment to it.

## THE NEW DAY

It is in connection with this very point, quintessential in our view, that the crisis in Stalinism is at last playing a decisive part, and opening up great new possibilities.

Since the death of Stalin, which was a remarkable personal symbolization of the end of an era, a succession of sensational revelations has ripped to dirty shreds the monstrous myth of Stalinist "socialism." For all practical political purposes, that myth, as well as the suffocating web of falsifications that composed it, is ended and cannot be popularized again.

Nothing that Khrushchev disclosed was new to us and to many like us. But that is a fact of minor importance. Nothing that the Russian army did in the bloody crushing of the fight for socialist freedom of an entire people in Hungary, or that Stalinist propaganda did in defaming it, was unexpected by us who long ago knew the brutally reactionary and imperialist character of the bureaucracy that rules the "socialist" state of

# As the Western Communist Parties Wobble Under the Blow . . .

Russia. That too is of small moment. Of immense importance is that the crisis in Stalinism climaxed by the odious butchery in Hungary has had a shattering effect upon the Communist Parties and those who support or follow them, and nowhere has this effect been more devastating than in the United States, which is where we are after all most immediately and directly concerned.

The Communist Party survived, with surprisingly little difficulty, the crisis of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939. Many turned their backs upon it in horrified disgust, but it retained its main strength and even advanced beyond it later in the war. This was not due simply to the fact that Russia presently became the victim of a Nazi attack and the ally of the United States, but above all to the continued prevalence of the myth that Stalinist Russia represented a socialist society or at any rate represented some sort of socialist progress, from which the pact with Hitler was a momentary aberration imposed by its fear of an attack by England, France and, of course, Finland.

**The present crisis is of another kind and has other consequences.**

It has broken the Communist Party in this country beyond repair. It has broken its past monopoly of leadership over the American radical, socialist and liberal movement. So far as the eye can see to the end of the political horizon, it has broken any possibility of reconstituting this leadership.

## CP IS FINISHED

To a greater and more important respect (at least relatively) than in any other party of the Communist movement, it has created in the American Communist Party and its periphery new trends and even open factional divisions which represent a genuine, though in our opinion limited, endeavor to face problems which are to them newly disclosed. Not the least of these problems is that of an independent reunited socialist movement, not within the framework of the Communist Party itself, as the still unregenerated Stalinist leaders think, but outside of it.

These endeavors, as is indicated above, are in our opinion not only arbitrarily limited but even misleading, particularly to those most directly involved. To think that the Communist Party in this country has been so devastated because of "ultra-left" mistakes in the past is as far from the mark, indeed as completely irrelevant, as to think that "right opportunist" mistakes were the cause. The CP survived a ton of such mistakes, and if they were all or even mainly what was involved, the CP's problems would be pretty much trivial ones, to be resolved in an almost routine way.

Or even to think that its disasters are due to the wretched and reactionary witchhunt of the government against it is no less than completely misleading. It is a true case of mistaking effect for cause.

A radical party does not always or even often thrive on police persecution, to be sure. But to invoke the police persecution as an explanation for the isolation and odium in which the Communist Party is gripped today is to be blind to the obvious and easily demonstrable fact that the appeals for defense and protection against the persecution have fallen on so many deaf ears in the labor and democratic public almost entirely because the CP is universally identified with a regime that is not only the "enemy of the country" but is the arch-representative of the totalitarian enslavement and gruesome repression of countless millions of people in the name, of all things, of socialism and democracy.

## TOWARD RETHINKING

And it is especially the minority in the Communist Party, which is seeking in its own way to deal with this problem, that is most gravely mistaken if it believes that it can place upon the same level the mistakes of other radical groups (and we have all made our share of mistakes, including bad mistakes) with what it designates as the "mistakes" of its comrades at the head of the Stalinist regimes. What was spoken from the mouth of Khrushchev in his appalling revelations and from the mouth of his tank cannons in Budapest were not mistakes — they were crimes, inexcusable and unforgivable, which it is downright grotesque to

equate with mistakes or even false political views that are so well known to exist in other radical political currents.

Nobody stands so much in the way of the contribution that thinking and rethinking militants of the Communist Party can make to the reconstitution of a united and effective socialist movement in this country as those who still fail to make unambiguously and forthrightly clear the view that totalitarianism is not and cannot be the road to socialism, that socialists cannot and must not be apologists for totalitarianism in any way, that socialism is not some abstract economic order that must first be established without democracy, but is rather the living, constantly unfolding social realization of democracy.

We, who were not at all born with this view firmly and clearly in our minds, hold to it all the more firmly and clearly once we have acquired it and been fortified in our insistence upon it by all that has happened in the recent decades. We ask no more of anyone else. But we ask also for no less.

## TO FILL THE VACUUM

**Whatever the course of further development of those who have remained with the Communist Party, the outstandingly important fact is that its irretrievable decline as leader and spokesman of American radicalism, or American socialism, has left a veritably vast vacuum in this country. It can and must be filled.**

We for our part do not have any illusions as to the ease or speed with which that can be done. The radical movement is fragmented and exceptionally weak— weaker than it has been organizationally at least at any time since the turn of the century.

It will acquire its real strength and once again become a political movement—which, unlike a propagandist group or sect, can call upon hundreds of thousands and even millions of workers to follow it in political action and have them heed the call—when the American working classes, represented above all by the huge trade-union movement and the remarkable mass movement of the Negro people, experience a new upsurge of radical thought and activity.

But there is no need to wait with twiddling thumbs until that magic hour strikes. The highly important work of preparing for that time by the maximum concentration of all those who already, now, are interested in building the foundations for a serious socialist movement is the task that confronts us all. And the task is realizable now because one of the most important limiting conditions of the past period has been effectively removed.

It is not an easy task, it goes without saying. There are almost as many complications and difficulties as there are opportunities.

There is a great number and variety of socialist groups, and an even greater number of unaffiliated socialist individuals. Many of them have inhabited the past so long, and fought the old wars so often, that they have developed a comfort and inertia of old usage from which it is difficult (and in some cases it would be a pity) to detach them.

## SIDETRACK: TAKE CARE

There is also, and perhaps this is more important than any other single factor, the hope on the part of many that a new movement can be constituted out of some of the existing groups and unattached individuals which would not be associated with the Communist Party, it is true, but which would nevertheless proclaim itself, openly or more prudently, a part of the "socialist camp"—that innocent but spurious euphemism for the regimes of Stalinist totalitarianism.

**If such a movement were ever to materialize, it would and could be nothing but a refurbished Stalinist or pro-Stalinist formation. It would not contribute to the development of an authentic socialist movement in this country, capable of winning strength in the working classes or deserving it: It would, on the contrary, sidetrack such a movement, at least for a time.**

Where such a view is put forth on the grounds that a socialist movement in this country must be sympathetic to the peoples of the "socialist camp," it is almost fantastic. All our sympathy and solidarity is with these peoples, and it is precisely that which makes any solidarity or sympathy with the regimes that op-

press them intolerable for a socialist movement. It is hard to say what Hungary showed if it did not show that!

A socialist unification in this country which does not from the very start proclaim itself as a democratic socialist movement, will never become a significant movement. And for the benefit of scholars, pedants and hair-splitters, we are ready to offer as a "provisionally" acceptable definition of a democratic socialist movement, one which is decidedly as staunch and forthright in its demand for and support of democratic rights for the people of the "socialist camp" as in its demands and support of democratic rights in the camp of capitalist rule.

Any socialist, including those who regard totalitarian Russia as some kind of socialist or working-class regime, who has not learned from the crisis of Stalinism that this is the irreducible minimum for collaboration of socialists who differ on other theoretical and political questions, has by this failure deprived himself of the contribution he could otherwise make to reuniting and rebuilding the socialist movement.

## ROAD TO UNITY

**The Independent Socialist League, and here it is joined by the Young Socialist League, is ready and eager to make its contribution to the union and reconstruction of socialism, to utilize the new opportunities to the utmost.**

We do not for a moment hold the position that the reunion of the socialist movement of this country, after so many years of the different groups and currents confronting and debating so vehemently their conflicting views on theoretical, political and even historical questions, can be achieved by demanding of everyone else, no matter how politely, that they all accept our views, or a discreetly worded version of our views, as a pre-condition for unity; such a position would be preposterous.

Differences of opinion on controversial questions, including differences on matters of theory, are a downright necessity in a socialist movement, with due regard for the time and place for them and the responsibility toward the movement as a whole. The demand for conformity in advance on all questions, even on important ones, is as intolerable for a real socialist movement as the demand for "confessions" and breast-beating—both are a form of socialist existence best left to the exclusive attributes of Stalinism.

Clearly defined positions on the essential question of democratic socialism for all the world, as indicated above, and democratic rights for all the members of the party, these are the only necessary limitations for the reunification of the socialist movement, if not for an eternity then at least for the entire next period that we can visualize.

## SP ORIENTATION

**For the reasons we have set forth in other articles in our press and from the public platform, we regard the traditional organization of American socialism, the Socialist Party, as distinguished, despite its present weakness, from all the other socialist groups. The Socialist Party can be regarded as the already-existent framework for the union of all democratic socialists.**

It is possible to build it up, not as the arena for new schisms to add to those that have fragmented socialism in this country, but as the socialist pole of attraction for all workers, Negro and white, all intellectuals, students and professional people who share the aims of socialism, and see no way of achieving it except through the organized action of a genuine movement.

The pole of attraction of yesterday's radical movement was organized Stalinism. What is new is that it is now discredited beyond hope. What is new is that it is now possible to think realistically in terms of building a new pole of attraction which will not be a discredit to socialism.

The Socialist Party can play a decisive part in doing the job. Its responsibilities in this are exceeded only by its opportunities. The boldness and imagination it requires to seize the opportunities will be exceeded, we are convinced, by the yielded fruit.

For ourselves, who are in enthusiastic earnest about the possibilities for a new beginning, and who therefore spurn all

## The ISL Program in Brief

The Independent Socialist League stands for socialist democracy and against the two systems of exploitation which now divide the world: capitalism and Stalinism.

Capitalism cannot be reformed or liberalized, by any Fair Deal or other deal, so as to give the people freedom, abundance, security or peace. It must be abolished and replaced by a new social system, in which the people own and control the basic sectors of the economy, democratically controlling their own economic and political destinies.

Stalinism, in Russia and wherever it holds power, is a brutal totalitarianism—a new form of exploitation. Its agents in every country, the Communist Parties, are unrelenting enemies of socialism and have nothing in common with socialism—which cannot exist without effective democratic control by the people.

These two camps of capitalism and Stalinism are today at each other's throats in a worldwide imperialist rivalry for domination. This struggle can only lead to the most frightful war in history so long as the people leave the capitalist and Stalinist rulers in power. Independent Socialism stands for building and strengthening the Third Camp of the people against both war blocs.

The ISL, as a Marxist movement, looks to the working class and its ever-present struggle as the basic progressive force in society. The ISL is organized to spread the ideas of socialism in the labor movement and among all other sections of the people.

At the same time, Independent Socialists participate actively in every struggle to better the people's lot now, such as the fight for higher living standards, against Jim Crow and anti-Semitism, in defense of civil liberties and the trade-union movement. We seek to join together with all other militants in the labor movement as a left force working for the formation of an independent labor party and other progressive policies.

The fight for democracy and the fight for socialism are inseparable. There can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism, and there can be no socialism without democracy. To enroll under this banner, join the Independent Socialist League!

**Get Acquainted!**

Independent Socialist League  
114 West 14 Street  
New York 11, N. Y.

I want more information about the ideas of Independent Socialism and the ISL.

I want to join the ISL.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

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pettifogging maneuvers in the name of a good cause, we are fully conscious of our own responsibilities. The United States has been the great and unfortunate exception long enough. We here can begin again the building of a movement that can stand shoulder-high with the socialist movements of the rest of the world. We face the prospect with confidence in success.

# 5 'Prudence' or Cold Counter-Revolution? The 'Gomulka Way' In the Polish Revolution

By HAL DRAPER

In Hungary the fight was clearly, in the eyes of the world, a struggle between the united Hungarian people in revolution versus the Stalinist totalitarian power resting on Russian tanks. But in Poland the nature of the contending forces and the question of who is on which side have been far more obscured in the common view.

In and right after October 1956 the popular acceptance was that the Polish revolution was headed by Wladislaw Gomulka, whose democratic bona-fides were naturally guaranteed by the fact that he had suffered in jail from Stalin's hangmen for his "Titoist" deviations. Unlike the rash Hungarians, however, the prudent Poles led by the wise Gomulka knew how to get around the threat of Russian tanks and butchery. Gomulka did not try to fight the Russians head-on, thus giving them an excuse to unleash their massacre; no, he was too smart. Restraining the too adventurist elements among the people, he extracted concessions from the Russians but did not push them too hard; freedom was going to be gained gradually, piece by piece, with the Russians having to yield step by step because at no point was the wily Gomulka going to give them a handle for armed intervention. The Poles were going to get by skillful tactics what the Hungarians had failed to get by force. This was the "Gomulka way" to win liberation while avoiding a blood-bath.

By the spring of 1957, if not before, it is already clear that something has gone wrong with this clever "Gomulka way."

**The Gomulka regime is not advancing freedom, not even millimeter by millimeter, but rather repressing the revolutionary democratic elements more and more boldly and openly.**

Press liberties are being removed rapidly, and the intellectual life of the country is moving in the direction of re-totalitarianization. The turbulent youth and students, who played such an important part in the October upheaval, are being put back in the straight-jacket of a state-controlled youth organization.

The revolutionary democratic left is being denounced as "revisionist" and dangerous, if not outright restorationist and reactionary. Stalinist leaders are being brought forward instead of scrapped (like Deputy Premier Zenon Nowak) or reimposed (like the former trade-union bureaucrat Klosiewicz, who once more gets a state job). Left-wing editors of the party and popular press have been arbitrarily fired, like Matwin of *Trybuna Ludu* or Korotynski of *Zycie Warszawy*. The Workers Council system, which was a prime hope of the proletarian socialist supporters of the revolution in the factories, is prevented from expanding and from becoming a new organizer of the workers' social power at the point of production. Gomulka is making his peace not only with the Polish Stalinists but also with the Russian rulers, most dramatically indicated by his approval of the hated Kadar regime in Hungary.

**The revolutionary democratic left wing is beginning to talk about "cold Kadarization." It begins to look as if the "Gomulka way" is the way to put down a revolution without Russian tanks, rather than a clever way to make a revolution without sacrifice.**

But this too, while true, does not adequately summarize the nature of the Gomulka experience.

## TWO REVOLUTIONS

A basic problem of the revolution in East Europe is the interrelation between the two revolutions that compose it: the national revolution against Russian domination, and the social revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy, including the native Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Hungarian Revolution was both; this fact gave it an undivided dynamism.

The fact that one could be separated from the other had first been shown in practice by the Tito-Moscow break in 1948. "Titoism" was and is national-Stalinism: the aspiration for national independence from Russian rule on the part of, and under the control of, native rulers on the basis of the same social system (bureaucratic collectivism) and the same political regime (totalitarianism) as exists in Russia itself. The satellite fuhrers of East Europe are branch agents of the Kremlin; Tito went into business for himself.

But for the masses, national freedom from Russian rule was ardently desired not only because the people detested Russian bosses alone; they wanted to get rid of all tyrants; it was clear that the Russian tyrants had to be thrown off first; this in itself was worth cheering. This raises the question of disposing of native despots too, but does not take care of it. It is enough that it raises it.

That is why the national revolution tends to awaken the social revolution even if they are not intertwined to begin with.

In Yugoslavia, the break with Moscow had come solely from above, as a result of the latter's overly crude pressure on the Tito regime; the Yugoslav people learned of the break with as much surprise as the rest of the world. They cheered, but as onlookers, not as participants or actors. Under these circumstances, the national element was kept most distinct from the social. Even so, the break with Moscow forced the Tito regime to begin a series of real social concessions at home (especially to the peasant mass, in the form of decollectivization and lowered economic pressure) and of demagogic pretenses at "democratization" which never went outside the framework of totalitarian politics.

**The Polish Revolution was fundamentally different. It did not flow from a break with Moscow on the regime level, but from a mass struggle from below against the regime, which in turn forced a partial break with Moscow. In this way the Polish Revolution was a continuation of the process which had started in the great June days in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and not a continuation of the Tito pattern.**

The Polish Revolution broke out as a social revolution. A social revolution in any of the East European satellites must also, and automatically, be a national revolution against the Russian power which props up the satellite regimes; but while a social revolution here must be a national revolution, the contrary is not true.

## WARNING FROM POZNAN

This is the background for a short formulation of what happened in Poland: A decisive section of the Stalinist bureaucracy went over to national-Stalinism in order to head off the social revolution, under the impact of the mass uprising from below.

The face of the social revolution was first thrust forward in the great uprising in Poznan of June 1956. It was all the more portentous in that it started in the factories, spearheaded by the steel workers, after which it was joined in by the whole population.

It was by no means an attempt at revolution; on the contrary, it began as a demonstration for higher wages. Still without becoming an attempt at revolution, it naturally developed into a violent struggle against the state power and its organs, particularly the secret police and party.

For it is of the very nature of Stalinism (bureaucratic collectivism) that any uninhibited mass movement from below has no other enemy to oppose than the omnipotent state itself. That is why under this system there is much less distance between quiescence or apparent quiescence on the one hand, and turbulent revolutionary struggle on the other, or why events tend to lead from one to another so rapidly and surely. It is an overhead cost, and fatal defect, of totalitarianism that as soon as the people feel the least measure of release from the totalitarian straitjacket there are few further steps they can take without ripping the whole straitjacket to shreds, or trying to.

The Poznan uprising was a warning to the Stalinist bureaucracy led by Edward Ochab. (One difference between the Polish and Hungarian developments is that the Polish rulers got this advance warning; the Hungarian Stalinists did not. Ochab in Poland was able to adjust, where Gero in Hungary was not. Hence it is a paradoxical fact that the greater depth and strength of the Polish movement—and it was more deep-going than the corresponding one in Hungary—was the very reason why the Polish pattern was marked by less violence, bloody struggle and dramatic crises than the Hungarian.)

## TO RIDE THE STORM

After Poznan, it was clear to the bureaucracy that revolution was brewing. The Poznan uprising was only the sharpest symptom. Among the students and intellectuals, reflected in ever more open utterances in the press, especially the cultural organs, voices of criticism, dissent, dissatisfaction and heterodoxy were daring to be heard; just as in Hungary the Petofi Circle was becoming a forum for free opinion.

What to do?

One could take the bull by the horns and crack down on these burgeoning tendencies, teach the most daring ones a lesson, shut their mouths with terror and blood. This might work to begin with, or it might not; even if it worked, it might only eventually stir a more determined and violent assault by the people; even if it didn't, it was the more expensive way of doing it; even aside from this, it meant dropping all pretense at ruling with some support from below; it meant unleashing a terror such as the bureaucracy itself would have to live in fear of.

A storm was brewing, but wouldn't it be better to try to ride it out than to stamp it out? Or, to change the metaphor, when the people start marching, you get in front of them and lead them around, ever so carefully, to a point where they came from. If you don't, someone else will lead them to a more dangerous place.

The Polish bureaucracy split into two sections. One faction, which came to be called after its meeting place Natolin, held out for bulling it through, with the help of the Russian fist where necessary: undisguised Stalinism; the formula as before. The decisive section of the bureaucracy headed by Ochab kept their eyes fixed on Poznan and decided to ride along with the upheaval, to channelize it.

When the revolutionary street demonstrations and fighting broke out in October and the temperature of revolution began to rise, the Ochab leadership of the party had already started taking steps toward calling in Wladislaw Gomulka, to handle what was too hot for them.

Wladislaw Gomulka had been condemned as a "Titoist" after the 1948 break; before that he had been a leader in the post-war Stalinist totalitarianization of Poland, but now he was in disgrace and in jail, suspected of too much independence vis-a-vis Moscow. He was a "good Communist," that is, cut out of the same ideological cloth as Ochab or any of the other Stalinists; but he had credit with the masses as result of his arrest and record. (That was true of Kadar in Hungary too, by the way; Kadar exhausted his credit in a different way.)

## NATIONAL-STALINISM

Calling in Gomulka, however, meant going farther than just trotting out a leader who had not yet been discredited. It meant making a real concession to the mass ferment: the curbing of complete Russian domination, in order to take some of the nationalist steam out of the looming social-revolutionary movement.

As we know from the experience of Titoism, such a step is not at all to be understood merely as a reluctant concession on the part of the Polish leaders. They are sincerely for obtaining a maximum measure of national autonomy from the Russians, to whatever extent this may be possible without endangering them; this is the "Titoist" component which is an inherent element among the motivations of every satellite regime, even the most subservient. The revolution developing, however, made this course not simply a desirable aspiration or dream but a possibility and even a pressing necessity.

It was a pressing necessity in order to head off the social outburst. It was a possibility because, by pointing to the threatening storm, they could hope to convince the Russians to agree to a reluctant acceptance of some "anti-Russian" steps as a lesser evil, that is, to some concessions on the national field. This is what happened in October on the occasion of the famous "Eighth Plenum" when Gomulka's installation was accepted all around.

Thus, by balancing between the revolution from below and the Russian power which overshadowed them, the new regime gained nationalist concessions (de-Russification of the army, ouster of the symbol Rokossovsky, etc.), though the Russian troops still remained in the country. With the popular credit thus obtained, the regime swung into its drive to tranquilize the uncontrolled revolutionary ferment, and then, by degrees, to re-totalitarianize.

Their positive program was a national-Stalinism: that is, a bureaucratic collectivist regime run by, and operated for the benefit of, Polish totalitarians, not Russian ones, but in amicable alliance with the Russians and not without profit to them. They sought to convince the Russians by pointing to the threat of revolution; they sought to convince the revolution by pointing to the Russians.

## "OUR SIDE"

In order to stabilize this balancing act, the Gomulka regime (perhaps better called the Gomulka-Ochab regime) made its major new concessions not to the workers but to the peasantry (de-collectivization and drastic cut in compulsory deliveries) and to the Catholic Church (reinstitution of religious training in the schools, etc.). Thus the regime leaned across the workers and dissident intellectuals to find footing in the alien social forces represented by these two holdovers from the old society, without however fearing any serious pressure toward the restoration of the old capitalist society.

It is doubtful how long the regime can thus balance among the contending social forces, and how long it can avoid drawing closer and closer to the unreconstructed Stalinists in a common front against the revolution which is the basic threat to both. In any case, what is essential is that at stake in Poland is not good or bad reforms bestowed by a good or bad leader, but rather the fate of a revolution, a mass upheaval which began by shattering the Polish totalitarianism, and which is still very much alive, though in retreat, as this is written.

In this, "our side" is the side of the revolutionary democratic left wing in Poland, including the workers and Communist militants and students who are denounced by the regime as "revisionist" because of their democratic socialist aims. We do not and cannot give them advice on tactics or "prudence," but their course, however "prudently" pursued, is the deadly enemy of the Gomulka regime.

They will be in the forefront to defend Poland under anyone's regime, including Gomulka's, against Russian assault if it comes to that, but in Poland they cannot escape a fateful clash with the regime in their struggle to extend October to a social revolution—the democratic socialist revolution.

# 6 The Greatest Blow for Peace The Revolution's Impact on The West and the War Danger

By PHILIP COBEN

The Hungarian and Polish revolutions of 1956 mark a new period not only in the struggle for socialist freedom against Stalinism, but also in the fight against war and the danger of war.

Its impact is not only on the underpinnings of the Russian empire but also on the bases of the Western capitalist war alliance.

Yesterday, supporters of the Western camp and its structure of military alliances with some of the most reactionary forces in the world, like Franco and Chiang Kai-shek, could scoff at the socialist alternative: the "visionary" idea of a democratic foreign policy which was aimed at blowing up the Russian empire from within—a socialist and revolutionary foreign policy, fundamentally incompatible with capitalism.

Yesterday, they could feel "realistic" and "practical" in supporting the line of an imperialist military alliance against the Stalinist threat, as the only thing that could save the "free world" from totalitarian conquest and enslavement.

But the revolution that was "unrealistic" yesterday now stands astride East Europe as big as life.

It is the world's most massive buffer against war.

And at the same time the NATO war alliance is seen to play the role of a reactionary barrier to the spread of this revolution which is the hope of the world.

It was the bog of NATO and its rearmament of Germany, and virtually only this argument, which was trotted out in Poland in order to turn back the onrush of the revolution. Gomulka's speeches pointed to the West's war bases as the justification of and reason for the maintenance of Russian troops in Poland, as against the revolutionists' demands. It was an argument that worked.

Even in Hungary, where no Stalinist argument had any chance of working, the main propagandistic weapon resorted to was to try to smear the revolution with a tie-up to the West, with capitalist "restorationism," with pro-Western reactionaries like Cardinal Mindszenty.

The West's stock of H-bombs is no friend of the revolution against Stalinism. It is its enemy.

## IN SPITE OF NATO

Right after the Hungarian Revolution, even American party-liners could see what was now the greatest deterrent to war. "U. S. SEES REVOLTS ENDING WAR THREAT," was the headline over a N. Y. Herald Tribune think-piece by Marguerite Higgins. The Scripps-Howard foreign editor cabled from Berlin that the "best-informed diplomats" said "The biggest effect of the Polish-Hungarian revolts on the world situation will be to restrain Russian aggression in Europe," and the East Europe empire is no longer "a defensive fortress for Russia and a base for attack on the West" but rather "a death trap for Russian armies"—all because of the revolution.

Very true. But that which he says is no longer true happens to be the only reason used to justify the existence of NATO and the whole military-alliance policy of the U. S. and the Western capitalist world.

In this new era of the same social revolution for socialist freedom against Stalinism, the danger of the third world war, whose shadow has been hanging over the world, now recedes. This is so not because of NATO but in spite of it; not because of the United States' stock of H-bombs but in spite of it; not because of Western threats of "massive retaliation" but in spite of them; not because the Stalinist camp is overawed or intimidated by a re-armed and remilitarized Germany in the heart of Europe, but in spite of the reactionary effects of this move.

Russia's greatest assist in its brutal massacre of the Hungarian people came from those mainstays of NATO, America's two leading allies England and France, when (together with Israel)

they stole the show from Budapest by falling on Egypt in order to restore their imperialist power in the Middle East and North Africa. There has never been any more spectacular demonstration of how the two rapacious imperialisms, east and west, feed on each other's crimes.

## "DEATH TRAP"

What liberal can now find a reason for justifying the "realistic" policy of bolstering up Franco, and thus repressing the Spanish revolution, in the name of "defending the free world" against Stalinist armies pictured as sweeping over Europe? What inspires the revolution against Stalinism—American aid and friendship to this fascist ex-ally of Hitler, or a democratic and anti-imperialist policy of friendship with the revolutionary forces against this tyranny?

In Stalinist China, just as Gomulka points his finger at German militarization under the American aegis, so Mao Tse-tung points to the fact that the only American-sponsored alternative to his own totalitarian rule is the return of that butcher of the Chinese people, Chiang Kai-shek. Which is a bigger blow against the war treat—the installation of atomic guided missiles in Chiang's Formosa, as has now been done, or a break with this Chiang as part of a genuinely democratic foreign policy?

Which builds that "death trap" for Stalinism? And which on the other hand permits the Russians to extricate themselves from the consequences of the crushing hatred felt by the satellite peoples?

Which inspires the peoples of East Europe to put sharp teeth in the "death trap"—U. S. backing of a monarchist dictatorship in Jordan based on everything reactionary, backward and primitive in that country, bought for dollars, or rather a United States that would line itself up in sympathy with progressive, anti-imperialist Arab aspirations?

The policy and very existence of the Western capitalist war camp is an impediment to the revolution against Stalinism. But the revolution against Stalinism is the greatest obstacle to war. This is the big lesson of the East European revolution to the West.

## TO HELP HUNGARY

All this is bound up with the main reasons why the Western powers could not aid the Hungarian revolution. We mean aid politically, not militarily, since no socialist can advocate that the U. S. precipitate the third world war for this or any other fair-seeming pretext.

Here too, under the direct impact of the revolutionary situation, even American party-liners got a glimmering.

• A New Leader editorial last November came out for steps toward a withdrawal of "all foreign troops from the Continent," in order to bring about "entirely new political possibilities [which] would emerge if Soviet troops went home."

• The London Observer reported that even Eisenhower himself was toying with the idea. There were people in Washington who were. The N. Y. Herald Tribune's Marguerite Higgins came out with a column that started like a manifesto: "There is a way of helping Hungary. . . . This involves a dynamic move by the U. S. . . . to offer boldly to withdraw American forces west of the Rhine in Europe on condition that Russia withdraw forthwith from Eastern Europe and give Germany its freedom. . . ."

• In the New Republic about the same time, Richard Lowenthal discussed

"Hungary—Were We Helpless?" He too offers a version of this idea. "It was the only chance," he says, of influencing the Russians' action, and "this chance was missed."

Yesterday, when socialists proposed withdrawal of troops we were told that U. S. soldiers were the only defense against the Stalinist hordes. We replied that the real defense was the awakening of the revolution against Moscow. It was worth a smirk, a blank stare, or remarks about dogmatists who haven't learned anything. Now Republican journalists and State Department hangers-on were talking nostalgically about what should have been done and the chances that were missed.

## BOLD CONCEPTION

To be sure, this mood did not and could not last long with these elements: Their idea had cropped up under the impress of dramatic struggles, not of a consistent idea; and they were able to forget it as soon as the headlines ceased screaming. It fitted in with none of their other ideas; it dropped out.

The whole bold conception can be an integral part only of a revolutionary approach to the problem of the war danger. The perspective of awakening revolution against Moscow requires that the revolutionary spirit first be awakened on this side.

But this flare-up of political thinking illuminated the potentiality.

Try to imagine a Western world which has given up its military-base and H-bomb encirclement of Russia in order to permit the revolution to encircle Russia; which has aligned itself in practice with the colonial peoples of Asia and Africa in order to spotlight the colonialism of Moscow; which has ceased to be the ally and prop of every outlived despot and reactionary in the non-Stalinist world; in other words, a Western world which is following a consistently democratic and anti-imperialist foreign policy:

What a tremendous impulsion would be given to the volcanic revolutionary forces which are battering at the inner vitals of the Russian empire!

## THEY WERE AFRAID

This is not the only way in which political (not military) help could have come from the West. We are not only talking about demonstrations of solidarity—though even on this elementary ground the American labor movement was a disgrace. (It collected tens of thousands of dollars for relief purposes for refugees, etc., but its only manifestation of solidarity was, alas, in supporting a Madison Square Rally in New York which was dominated by a largely reactionary audience and which made news by booing Anna Kethly.)

Rainer Hildebrandt, German author of The Explosion, the book on the East German uprising of June 1953, has described how in West Berlin and West Germany workers' demonstrations and workers' leaders demanded that an appeal be made to the East German workers to come to the support of the Hungarian and Polish fighters. The chairman of the West Berlin trade unions, Ernst Scharnowski, had proposed that an appeal be broadcast to the East German working class for a "peaceful general strike" of solidarity. But the authorities made sure nothing was done. As in June 1953 for that matter, they were scared most of all by the very idea of revolutionary struggle, even if directed against the Stalinists, since it is contagious.

"I personally believe," wrote Hildebrandt, who is only a good liberal and not even a socialist, "that if at the end of October there had been sit-down strikes in Germany, the Soviets would not have been able to launch their blood-bath in Hungary. The Soviet military forces are not homogeneous. Soviet soldiers joined the Hungarian freedom-fighters in the first days of the revolt, and many Russians in

uniform showed sympathy for the Hungarians. It would have been a great risk to proceed with such an army against several oppressed peoples simultaneously.

"Once before, the West passed up such a magnificent opportunity: On June 16, 1953, when the construction workers of East Berlin called for a general strike, Western government quarters knowingly suppressed the words 'general strike.' The radio stations [of West Berlin] were not allowed to broadcast this slogan. Today we know that if the forces which on the following day created 'June 17' had assumed the form not of an explosion but of a strike lasting several days, the strike would have spread to the major plants of these satellites and the forced-labor camps of the Soviet Union."

But the truth is that the Western leaders were almost as much afraid of the spread of revolution as the Stalinist rulers themselves! Their failure to act was not due to stupidity or timidity alone, but to their political nature.

This startling fact has been put down in black and white by prominent spokesmen and commentators themselves. Last October and November the N. Y. Times and other papers were full of categorical reports from Washington as to the fears of the State Department that the East European revolution would get out of hand: To cite one: on October 28 Thomas J. Hamilton of the Times Washington bureau wrote of the "Hungarian patriots" that "Their successes thus far, paradoxically enough, cause some forebodings in Washington." The Times' Drew Middleton cabled from London that opinion there looked on the Hungarian Revolution as weakening "democratic forces," and complained that "events have moved beyond the capacity of the West to guide or advise."

## HOPE AND A PORTENT

The "West" was getting as uneasy as Moscow that things were out of its control.

Foreign Minister Pineau of France publicly warned in a speech against any Western attempt to "exploit" the Polish and Hungarian revolts. It might give Moscow a pretext to go back on "de-Stalinization," he explained, like many others — as if Moscow's "de-Stalinization" was more than a demagogic illusion if it was just looking for an excuse to go back on it!

Walter Lippman, most bluntly, soberly indicated warnings against helping the spread of the East European revolution on the ground that revolution, after all, was contagious. "If such a rebellion were to spread to Eastern Germany, as it might well do, it would almost certainly mean that in some way or other Western Germany would be sucked into the conflict."

And after Western Germany—what? A portentous revolutionary perspective opens up. The Western ideologists draw back in fright.

They cannot hold on to any revolutionary weapons to break up the Stalinist empire. Their only conception of a deal for "peace" is a deal to divide the world into spheres of power between the two empires—with Russia "containing" itself within its own bailiwick. They can think only of an imperialist road to "peace" which sacrifices the subject peoples to the masters on both sides.

The revolution in East Europe is a mortal danger to both war camps. It is therefore also the hope of socialism and peace on both sides of the world.

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# 7 The Unexpected Vanguard

## The Role of Youth Behind the Iron Curtain

By MICHAEL HARRINGTON

In a message to a Paris rally last November, Albert Camus said: "I admit that I was tempted in recent years to despair of the fate of freedom. . . . I feared that it was really dead, and that was why it sometimes seemed to me that all things were being covered over by the dishonor of our time. But the young people of Hungary, of Spain, of France, of all countries, proved to us that this is not so and that nothing has destroyed or ever will destroy that pure and violent force that impels men and nations to demand the honor of living with integrity."

In saying this, Camus was acknowledging a tremendous political fact of the past year, one that was especially apparent in the struggle against Stalinism in Eastern Europe: that youth was playing an extremely important role, that youth was in the leadership of the revolution.

The facts are well known.

In Poland, one of the main centers of the upheaval that broke out after Poznan and culminated in the events of October was a youth paper, *Po Prostu*. In the elections early in 1957, the youth continued to maintain their position of aggressive political leadership by opposing Gomulka's line and calling for the defeat of the old-line Stalinists on the Communist Party list. And now, at the official May Day parade in Warsaw it is reported that the police had to forcibly subdue students who were preparing to march with signs proclaiming "Down with Censorship" and "We Do Not Want To Be Unemployed Graduates" (a reference to the growth of unemployment in Poland).

In Hungary, the youth played the same kind of role.

The political center of the pre-revolutionary ferment there was the Petofi Circle, an organization of students and intellectuals. The revolution itself broke out after the police attempted to suppress a demonstration called by the youth. And months after the brutal and murderous suppression of the revolution, the students of Budapest continued to fight on together with the workers, and Kadar had to fight them with violence and police measures.

### GENERAL TREND

In Russia itself, reports emerged during the year describing a vast youth ferment. At a university in Moscow, one hundred and forty students were expelled for supporting the Hungarian Revolution. And there were other instances, cases in which party speakers were howled down, instances in which the youth rebelled against the totalitarian dictatorship.

In Russia, of course, the developments did not proceed as far as they did in Poland and in Hungary—to independent student organizations working out their own revolutionary programs—yet the ferment was undeniably there. And, at year's end, the reports continued to come in from all over the Stalinist empire, from China and from East Germany (where Wolfgang Harich, the intellectual leader of the student discontent, was sentenced to prison).

The leading role of youth in Poland and Hungary, the reports from Russia, China, and East Germany, these instances add up to an important generalization: that youth is one of the most important revolutionary elements in the entire Stalinist world.

What is the basis of this development?

There is no social class of "youth" comparable to a working class, a bourgeoisie or a Stalinist bureaucracy. More: in the Stalinist empire, the students occupy a privileged position. They are given the opportunity to attend school at state expense and are clearly marked for favored positions in the bureaucracy of the future. How, then, can we explain the role which they played? What is its significance for the future?

### DRAMATIC SIGN

To understand the role of the youth in the East European anti-Stalinist revolution, one must begin outside the university, among the people.

A *Po Prostu*, a Petofi Circle, these are only possible because of a general development in the society. They are the first dramatic, visible sign of a crisis which is their precondition. For it was precisely the disaffection of the masses, and particularly of the working class, which was at the bottom of the general phenomenon of the "thaw" in Stalinist society.

In response to these pressures, the ruling class attempts to head off an explosion by offering sopps. The party itself is torn by debate. And as a consequence, it becomes possible for the youth to speak, to take the first tentative steps toward organization.

But if a ferment in the society as a whole is a precondition of the emergence of political movement among the students and intellectuals, this still doesn't explain the revolutionary form which this movement takes almost from the start. To understand this, a whole series of factors have to be taken into account.

In Eastern Europe, where the Stalinist bureaucracy is a relatively new phenomenon imposed from the outside by force of Russian arms, the educational stratification which has now developed in Russia has not yet taken place. There is not an entire generation of children of the bureaucracy to fill the schools, to become the juvenile delinquents and the

"golden youth." At the same time, the regime cannot attempt to recruit its future cadres from the remnants of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, it turns to the children of the working class and the peasantry.

And this means that the formative social influence of these students lies in the conditions of life of the exploited and the oppressed. It sets up a natural link, for instance, between the students and the working class, one which certainly does not exist in many American colleges and is probably not at all as important in Russia itself.

### TRAINING FOR REVOLT

Secondly, the youth under Stalinism are constantly exposed to the classics of Marxism. Daily they read that the exploited must organize, that the workers must take their own destiny into their hands. And at the same time, they are told that they live in a "workers' state"—yet they have eyes.

That this education had its effect is apparent in the youth manifestos of both Hungary and Poland. They are phrased in the language of the revolutionary Marxian movement; they are committed to socialism. Thus, even deformed and Stalinized, the great tradition of the working-class movement takes root among the students.

Thirdly, the youth come into a peculiarly immediate contact with the totalitarian apparatus: they are confronted in everything they do by censorship. Thus, the slogans of the right to read, of freedom of books, have been evident in youth demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and East Germany. If one can speak of a student "condition of life," one of its natural necessities is academic freedom.

Significantly, the prerevolutionary discussion in Hungary began around a discussion of esthetics, of "socialist realism," and freedom for the artist. Yet, as the regime realized too late, the demand for any single freedom under Stalinism leads, by an almost inevitable chain reaction, to a revolutionary demand for full and complete freedom. In mid-October, the Hungarian Stalinists sought to ban the debates over "art" which were drawing five thousand students and intellectuals. But the revolution had already begun its course.

### SPOKESMAN OF MASSES

These are some of the crucial elements that influenced the form which the youth ferment took once it became possible. The children of exploited workers and peasants, trained in a perverted and deformed Marxism yet in Marxism, and confronting the repressive state in their own immediate experience through the continuing denial of all academic freedom, began to move. Their direction was pro-working-class, socialist, toward freedom for all.

In the second stage of the pre-revolutionary period, the students continue to play a crucial role. In their meetings, they begin to formulate a political program for the revolution—a program which is later adopted, in large measure, by the masses.

At this point, the youth are no longer acting as an effect, a consequence, of a revolutionary ferment outside of the university. They now, in turn, influence those mass pressures and, with the intellectuals and writers, begin to articulate the political demands of the people.

On October 21 in Budapest, for example, it was the student body of the Polytechnic University which made the following demands: withdraw Russian troops; revise economic treaties with Russia; secret general elections with more than one party; recognition of the right to strike; solidarity with the revolutionary movement in Poland. These points were later to be inscribed upon the banners of the workers' councils.

In one sense, they welled naturally out of all the Hungarian people after the nightmare of a decade of Stalinism. But their first articulation, their first publi-

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appears as a section in all regular issues of Labor Action. Published, and independently edited, by the Young Socialist League, it is the only socialist youth weekly in the country. Don't miss it!

cation, came, in the immediate pre-revolutionary period, from the students and the intellectuals.

But once the revolution itself breaks out, the students recede somewhat into the background. They fight and die, to be sure. But the center of the revolution now becomes the masses in the street, and particularly the working class in arms. This is the decisive force from which all manifestos derive their authority and their meaning. And the students are not a social class; they are not organized, like the workers, into large, cohesive groups accustomed to common action by the very conditions of their existence. The role of the students now becomes auxiliary.

And yet, not one student group in Poland or Hungary maintained the contrary; there was no tendency, as far as we can tell from the reports, of youth "vanguardism" in the sense of substituting themselves for the working class. The students understood, as did everyone else in the society, that the revolution would have to be made, in the main, by the working class. And for this reason they addressed their appeals to the workers, they solidarized themselves with them—they projected an image of the revolution in the socialist tradition. And they were, of course, right.

### TOWARD FREEDOM

Thus, the further course of the revolution. Once the ferment has begun, the students participate in the very important task of articulating a political program. But once the revolution itself is in motion in the streets, the youth become auxiliary, they fight and die bravely, but their importance as a group recedes in the face of the immediate armed struggle.

But what is the next stage,

In Poland, the youth, even now, continue their role of articulating the political demands of the most advanced sections of the people. There, the peculiar outcome of the revolution—suspended between victory and defeat, moving backward slowly—has kept them in the forefront of events. In Hungary, where the revolution was murdered in cold blood by the Russians, the youth fought on into 1957, but eventually they were terrorized into silence by the Kadar regime.

And yet it is clear that the whole outcome of the East European revolution is temporary, that the Stalinists have not "returned" to their old regime, but found an uneasy stabilization. And in this situation, the students pose a continuing danger to the regime.

The conditions which led to the role which they played in Poland and Hungary still exist. They may be driven underground but, as the German socialists pointed out last month, they will continue their resistance, their meetings, their exchange of ideas.

In the anti-Stalinist revolution of tomorrow, one can be sure: youth will be there, playing an important role, for under Stalinism youth is in motion, and their direction is freedom.

### THE AIM OF THE YSL

The Young Socialist League is a democratic socialist organization striving to aid in the basic transformation of this society into one where the means of production and distribution shall be collectively owned and democratically managed. The YSL attempts to make the young workers and students, who form its arena of activity, conscious of the need for organization directed against capitalism and Stalinism.

The YSL rejects the concept that state ownership without democratic controls represents socialism; or that socialism can be achieved without political democracy, or through undemocratic means, or in short in any way other than the conscious active participation of the people themselves in the building of the new social order. The YSL orients toward the working class, as the class which is capable of leading society to the establishment of socialism.

—From the Constitution of the YSL

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