

# SPEAK YOUR PIECE

## No Place for 'Brain Trusts'

Editor, Daily Worker:

I think the co-cepts in the Max Weiss articles "Communists and Civil Liberties" were brilliant and inspiring. We Communists should digest the idea of civil liberties stated by Weiss: "Whatever may be the situation in other socialist lands, the Communist Party in our country advocates the maintenance of full civil liberties, including the right of dissent not only today, but on the morrow as well, under socialism".

The implications of this view are certainly far-reaching. However I want to raise here a different though related question.

Weiss points out that "American Communists have not always taken this position". No matter how much we may agree with Weiss' points, the question arises: When and how did this change in the Communist Party's position take place? The first I've heard about it is Max's articles.

A basic idea can hardly be said to be the position of the Communist Party when most of the Party hasn't even heard about it. The Party is basically individuals organized into clubs. A new concept can really be the position of the Party only when it has been thought out, argued out and agreed to by the majority of the membership.

Certainly the rampages of

McCarthyism and Eastlandism have hindered wide discussion in the past few years. But if nearly every Communist Party club in the South was able to take part in discussion on the draft program which evolved into "The American Way" at the peak of repression, surely there was room for broad discussion of our concept of civil liberties in 1955 or 1956.

Many of us have been groping in recent years or months toward what I consider Max Weiss' profoundly correct conclusions. Nevertheless, I sharply question the correctness of a blunt statement by the National Education Director of the Communist Party that such is now the position of the Communist Party. Could not Weiss as a leading individual have presented his thoughts advocating a new position and opening up wide discussion in the left? Instead there is a deadening thud of finality in his statement.

The Communist Party must become a more democratic, thinking party. It has no place for "brain trusts" or for basic changes in its thinking by announcement. The Party's constitution provides for conventions to carry out basic changes in position. When conditions permit, I hope the next pre-convention and convention discussion features prominently such questions as civil liberties —and inner-Party bureaucracy.

JUNIUS SCALES

## N.Y. Times Stands Corrected

Editor, Daily Worker:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter sent March 26 to the Times to correct certain errors in the news account covering the meeting at which I spoke at Yugoslav Hall.

They have apparently decided not to publish this letter. I believe it important that the correction appear in the Daily Worker.

Editor, New York Times:

On Saturday, March 17, the Times carried an unsigned news account of a meeting at which I spoke on the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

I believe the reporter was Harry Schwartz. He chose to limit his report to my remarks about Stalin. I have no quarrel with Mr. Schwartz or the "Times" on selection. It should be said, however, that my remarks covered a wide range of subjects, discussed at the Congress beyond the issue of Stalin.

Your reporter wrote that I announced that a convention of the American Communist Party would soon be held to "draw up a new Party line in the light of the decision Moscow took at last month's Twentieth Soviet Party Congress".

It is true I did say that consideration of a national convention was under discussion; but

beyond that your correspondent went sadly askew. I spoke of the need of a convention after a lapse of five years for the purpose of reviewing American Communist policies. There was not the slightest suggestion on my part that the purpose of such a convention was "to draw up a new line" based on the Soviet Party Congress. In fact, I specifically refuted the notion, in my original remarks and in my answers, that we could evaluate the work of the American Communist Party within the framework of the 20th Congress or as an extension of discussion of that gathering.

I placed great emphasis on the question of the independence of parties including our own. I stressed that the Communist Party of the U.S.A. would determine its own policies based on conditions and traditions of our own country. Perhaps your reporter, like so many "government experts" in Smith Act cases, considers this "Aesopian". But he has the duty first to report what I said, as he has the privilege later of his own interpretation.

Your account compounds the felony, so to speak, by stating also that I "hailed the guidance given by the Soviet Party Congress for the formulation of the American Communist line."

I did hail the 20th Congress. I hailed it because in my view it advanced the cause of world peace by its dramatic and con-

fidant reassertion of the principle of peaceful coexistence, by its clarification of the position that war is not inevitable. I hailed it because it expressed general agreement with theories that have evolved in many countries, including our own, by Communist Parties, and other groupings, that socialism could be achieved in this period by peaceful, democratic and constitutional means. It thereby helped to demolish any dogmatic conception that all countries would have to pursue the same revolutionary path that Russia did some 40 years ago.

The Soviet Party Congress did not undertake to formulate our policies or anybody's policies but their own. I said nothing that could be construed otherwise.

Yes, we have a great deal to learn from the 20th Congress. And not we alone. It will be sad indeed if the interpretation of current developments in the Soviet Union will be "filtered" through House Committee on Un-American Activities based on the testimony of such "impartial experts" as Louis Budenz, Whittaker Chambers, Max Eastman, Eugene Lyons, Clarence L. Manion and others. The Soviet erred in developing the "cult of the individual". When will we recognize and put an end to the unhealthy "cult of the professional informer and Soviet hater" in our country?

GEORGE B. CHARNEY

## The Need for a Critical 'New Look' --- 2.

BY JAMES S. ALLEN

### ARTICLE II

ONCE the halo is removed from Stalin, he can be approached critically and, perhaps, objectively. Stalin did not make the era, the era made Stalin, within the concrete conditions of the time, against the specific historical and cultural background of the country, within a given world situation. That evaluation will take time, particularly since the archives, only now being unlocked, are still to be fully studied, his writings and deeds properly appraised against the events and needs of his time.

He has been removed from an exclusive pedestal in the Pantheon, and this is as it should be. It was brought about by the present collective leadership or, better said, the present collective leadership was formed in the process of a tough battle against the ideology of personal cultism, a battle brought into the open immediately after Stalin's death, and still being carried on against strong remnants of the cult and against the living, smaller Stalins that grew up in the party organization.

In pursuing this ideological battle, for which the public mind had to be prepared, the collective leadership that was being simultaneously formed had to take up the fight on many fronts. Anyone who has read the full reports and speeches at the Congress, and has pondered the changes since the death of Stalin in 1953, cannot help but be struck by the frank exposure of the distortions and miscarriages of Socialist justice connected with one-man rule in the party and the government, and its stagnating effects upon Marxist thought.

THE CONGRESS concentrated its attacks upon all this, and also upon bureaucracy in the party and the state, upon the over-concentration of economic functions to the detriment of local initiative, upon unjustified economic inequalities in wages and conditions, upon violations of the Soviet legal

code at the expense of the rights of the Soviet citizen and of the exercise of Marxist criticism, upon some tendencies to override national autonomies in the Soviet Union, upon the docility of the trade unions, upon the aloofness of the higher educational institutions from the processes of production.

The entire pressure was directed at the elements of stagnation in Soviet practice and consciousness—at the "chairwarmers," the stick-in-the-muds, the quotation-citers, the wait-and-see people, the play-it-safe executives, the do-it-by-rote managers.

This process has barely begun, it is still unfolding. But in starting it, the collective leadership took the decisive initial step, also beginning to set right some of the injustices against innocent people, the distortions of Soviet history and the deadening rigidities of theory, abnormalities in relations with other Socialist countries, as in the case of Yugoslavia, or with other parties, as in the case of Poland.

To continue this process means a constant ideological struggle against remnants of the cult, for it is impossible overnight to change popularly-held idealized concepts of a man who has had such a profound impact upon history. Everything will have to be proved, substantiated by fact and document. The changes now going on in the Soviet Union will facilitate this, because harmful approaches and concepts are changed most effectively by the new and better conditions under which people live.

THE DISCUSSION on Stalin's role in history will proceed for a long time, and no doubt this discussion will become better informed, as the Soviet Union approaches the problem from all sides, as their own estimate begins to crystallize. For many years to come, there will be different opinions, and future generations confronted with new tasks and having new insights may render other judgments. But it is important, vital-

ly necessary, to remember throughout this agitated discussion that the Stalin era was, above all, an era of the building of socialism, in a country materially and culturally least prepared for it, with consequent shortcomings and misfortune—which other countries will be able to avoid, in fact have avoided, by virtue of the Soviet mistakes and sufferings.

THE AMERICAN Marxists, as well as the non-Marxist supporters of the Soviet Union (and these were many more during the great struggle against Hitlerism) took a correct and honorable position in ideologically defending the country of socialism against the anti-Communist Big Lie, which served and still serves the purposes of reaction in our own country. It is true that, by and large, they idealized the situation in the Soviet Union, overlooking many inner weaknesses or failing to explain them, in their anxiety to prevent the immeasurably greater crime, contemplated by world reaction, of strangling socialism abroad and democracy at home.

It can now be said from the vantage point of the present, from hindsight, how much better it would have been if the advocates of socialism in this country had taken more critical positions. But it must also be recognized, in all honesty, that only now do the advocates of socialism and progress have the breathing space as well as the insights, sharpened by self-criticism, for developing a more balanced approach. For only now, after the long and hard pull, has a world sector of socialism emerged, in a strong position, with the enhanced possibilities for enduring peace.

OTHER countries have taken their own paths to socialism, setting up a community of socialist nations, bringing to bear their own national experiences and traditions, their modes, their customs, their forms of struggle. From them we can also learn, just as the Soviet Communists have been learning.

We can learn critically, assess their experiences, not in order to tell them what to do but by comparison and study to gain a clearer concept of the historical process, learn that it cannot be blueprinted or diagrammed after a model. We must learn how to stand on our own feet in the basic sense of studying the concrete conditions, history, mores, forms of struggle, class composition and political structure of our own country—a country that has all the potentials of startling the world with something else than atomic shocks, once our people take the road of progress, begin to explore our own road to socialism.

In this country the discussion of the Soviet developments will proceed without profit unless lessons are drawn that are important to us. In time, the Soviet collective leadership will clarify many questions about the Stalin era, including their own role, because it is a duty they owe, in the first place, to their own party and their own people. In the process, many questions will be clarified before the entire world.

In the meantime, it must be recognized that free and constructive criticism as between socialist countries and between Marxist movements of various countries requires at its base a change in the inner atmosphere of the parties, the return to the basic principles of collective leadership, inner-party democracy, and freedom of discussion in the formulation of policy. Without this it is impossible to speak of criticism in the Marxist sense.

The most profitable lesson to be drawn from the Soviet events, the most important lesson for the American Left as a whole, is that when basic principles of workingclass party organization are violated everything suffers. The cult of personality can take over only when these principles are undermined, obscured or forgotten. Collective leadership is not es-

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## Happy About New Development

Editor, Daily Worker:

There is a spring in my step these days, and not only because of the weather.

What is happening in the Soviet Union internationally and in its foreign relations, and in the D.W. is wonderful.

Socialism is the aim, and only the CP, everywhere, has really had that aim, despite certain palliative statements. I am convinced it could not have been achieved so completely or so fast in the Soviet Union without the Soviet Union's following in general the path it did follow under Stalin. But that was for the Soviet Union and in Stalin's day.

But, again, particularly since the war I have felt that, despite the U.S. government's nefarious aims, Soviet Union security measures were extreme, unnecessary in a triumphant socialist society, and hardly explicable to doubting friends.

Continuing to feel the CP was the vehicle, it was, nevertheless, difficult to hold on at times, certain things being so patent (Anna Louise Strong, for instance, and Lysenko, to cite opposite instances).

This is a deep and involved business, this complex of pluses and minuses, and I am not so certain it could have been different (v. M. Weiss on historical antecedents last week — a much needed piece). But now, as Foster pointed out, it can be, is and is going to be different.

This is a vindication of keenness of sight of the vice-president of India, a philosopher, who several years ago told scoffing American reporters that he believed the Soviet Union would become more and more democratic.

Certainly the basic structure of the Soviet Union has all along been more democratic than any class society, but there were little disturbing overtones flowing from the cult of personality that jarred the vision and held back growth, certainly in this country, with its history. —M.R.