

# SPEAK YOUR PIECE

## Tolstoy Had The Right Idea

NEW YORK.

Editor, Daily Worker:

Leo Tolstoy in War and Peace found that the Russian people were the heroes of the War of 1812. They whipped Napoleon and saved their country when many leaders made mistakes. That was true again in 1941-1945.

No miracle man stopped the Nazis. The people — the great Socialist people — hurled Hitler back.

(Thoughts after reading Khrushchev's account of the blunders at Kharkov (1942) and elsewhere.)

ART SHELDON.

## Argument

### By Definition

Editor, Daily Worker:

In your "Speak Your Piece" column on May 31 you wrote editorially:

"The term 'Black Belt' is a widely accepted designation of the particular area and originated from a description of the black soil where slavery dominated."

Probably the "Black Belt" or part of it, does have black soil. James S. Allen in The Negro Question in the U.S. refers to "the black soil prairies across central Alabama, which is today an area of great density of Negro population." And possibly that is the origin of the term. But since the Communist Party published its pamphlet Self-Determination for the Black Belt in the early 1930s, up to 1956, the term "Black Belt" has invariably referred to an area of "great density of Negro population."

Allen proceeded to examine the changes in population and came to the conclusion that from 1860 to 1930 the "Black Belt" remained intact, a calculation which only makes sense if "Black Belt" referred to population, and which would have been ridiculous if it referred to soil.

According to the Bureau of the Census there is "a group of counties in eastern Virginia and N. Carolina; a belt of counties extending from the S. Carolina coast through S. Carolina, central Georgia and Alabama; and a detached area embracing a portion of the lower Mississippi River Valley. . . . This area of relatively high proportion Negro in the population corresponds generally with the area of relatively high density of Negro population and it is the area popularly designated as the 'Black Belt'."

W. E. B. DuBois in Black Reconstruction says of Mississippi:

"There was in this state a group of planters whose great plantations dominated the rich Black Belt. From Memphis to the Gulf were a succession of counties with 60 percent or more black population."

What is the importance of this error? For more than 20 years up to 1956 the Communist press consistently used "Black Belt" as referring to population and never once as referring to soil. But already on three occasions in 1956, I have seen it claimed in the left press that "Black Belt" refers to soil color. I think that this is the beginning of a campaign to deny the Communist Party's earlier position that the Negro people constitute a nation. If such is the case, the proposal should be debated openly and not smuggled in by erroneous definitions.

BERNARD ADES.

## Time to Stop The Pendulum

Editor, Daily Worker:

I am tempted to look at the phrase "Constitutional Communists" with a jaundiced eye, and call out, with a touch of sarcasm, take away the parchment, fellows, I remember when you became Davulian "anti-revisionist" 11 years ago.

And then we swing from Browderism to left sectarianism.

Now, back again to a new Browderism?

When anyone suggested in 1945 that all the people who were in leadership of the party had gone along with Browder except Foster, and that we could do with new leadership, we were told this was anti-leadership and unorganizational, etc. etc.

I think Constitutional Communists are fine, being radicals in the American tradition. But I think these new-look Constitutional Communists are really Twentieth Congress Communists, who rush in to revise their errors in the same spirit they revised them in 1945. I must say I have little confidence in their ability, however well-intentioned they may be.

I think we might examine the possibility that the entire National Committee should go to work, and that only persons who have been workers in shops in the last five years be considered as candidates.

Let's throw the Party Convention open to nominations from the floor, and let some of these people show their real

recognition of errors by honestly disqualifying themselves for leadership until they have proved they have some contact with and relationship to the working class and the whole people.

—Constitutional Communist.

## Disagrees With Editorial

Editor, Daily Worker:

I write to comment briefly on the editorial in the Daily Worker of June 7, entitled "The Daily Worker and the Khrushchev Speech." My remarks will be confined to the beginning of this editorial, where we read: "We were wholly ignorant that these crimes had been committed, yet there was reputable evidence had we but listened. . . . We did not want to believe these crimes could occur in a socialist state and so refused to believe."

It would have helped if the editorial had mentioned specifically what it meant by "reputable evidence." And it is far from the whole truth to say that the Communist Left did not believe the reports of monstrous injustice because it did not want to. Such a statement ignores the fact that there were reports from people ranging from Ambassador Davies to Stephen White of the N. Y. Herald Tribune, from the 1930's to the 1950's affirming that they—highly biased against the USSR—were convinced of the truth of the charges, some of which we are now told were false.

Such a statement ignores the fact that there were Communist correspondents, from the United States and from other countries, in the USSR who sent back full reports which were convincing. Such a statement ignores the fact that the responsible Communist leaders of the USSR and of other countries, in the Soviet Union, gave the lie to reports which we are now told we did not believe simply because we did not want to.

Such a statement ignores the fact that the reportage of the bourgeoisie from 1917 until 1956 has been filled with forgeries and lies, all having the most obvious motivation, and many of them refuted by other bourgeois commentators, from Walter Lippmann to Walter Duranty to Harrison Salisbury. It also ignores the fact that such charges appeared to be incompatible with the actual role of the USSR in combatting fascism and imperialism and war, and in building Socialism.

Doubts on specific points did accumulate and problems did

appear. Some of these were commented upon—as for instance your news concerning Robert Dunn's letter to the Soviet embassy expressing his disbelief in the charges against Anna Louise Strong, who he knew well. The writer of this letter sent a long communication to the National Committee of the Communist Party in November, 1954, raising many questions and problems in terms of American opinion concerning the USSR, and pointing out the need for fuller and more scholarly study of the facts concerning life and civil liberties in the Soviet Union. He did not, of course, do this as one who believed for a moment, then, in charges of terrible injustice, but he did raise these problems because he knew that such questions came from very decent and very progressive people and because he did not have persuasive replies, and his letter said so. I'm sure there are other instances of this nature.

Proper therapy requires accurate diagnosis. To understand our colossal errors in this particular, means probing much deeper than the erroneous assertion that the Left was willfully blind. The truth about criminal excesses in the USSR was kept from Communists and from others by Communists in the Soviet Union and there is the crux of the problem.

This whole question of the truth about the USSR is tied to the question of power within a socialist state, to the problem of proletarian dictatorship and civil liberties, to the effective form for the organization of Marxist-Leninist parties in various parts of the world. It is not to be shunted off in terms of what "should have been" and who "should have listened to whom."

HERBERT APTHEKER

## Which Formulations Were Harmful?

Editor, Daily Worker:

I have read Max Weiss' report to the National Committee meeting in which he took up the DW editorials on the Rajk case and the Jewish cultural leaders. Hundreds of words later, he decides the editorials were "correct" in being "critical" of the "mistakes" made, but speaks of "a number of wrong and harmful formulations" in the editorials, particularly the Rajk editorial.

Well, what were they? Why not let us in on it?

I felt just as Sid Resnick of Connecticut in his letter said he felt on reading the Rajk editorial: a real pride in my paper.

I could say the same about the editorial on the Jewish writers except that the deeds themselves left me so numb that I doubt if anything written about them, no matter how honest or with what clarity, could assuage the numbness. But I saw no "wrong and harmful formulation." And with both, I felt reassurance: that we were not covering up, that we were trying to face things honestly. I feel that the Daily under Johnnie Gates' leadership showed real initiative and courage, and I hope it continues.

Weiss himself seems to faintly hint that the national leadership of the party was a little slow on the uptake in regard to saying anything about the revelations official and unofficial from Moscow. Then it particularly behooves him to be succinct in criticism of the editorials in question, not toss off vague pronouncements. He suggests we learn America. As part of learning it, we might get rid of meaningless generalities and try calling a spade a spade.—M. L.

## Proof of the Pudding

Editor, Daily Worker:

A number of people have called this correspondent's attention to Khrushchev's attempt to substantiate his charges against Stalin by citing far removed instances, on the part of the latter of rudeness against Lenin's wife. In-as-much as there is scarcely a man living . . . unless he be a Saint, who has not at one time or another been rude to a woman, wife or otherwise, this seems a rather far-fetched attempt by Khrushchev to support his case and will carry little weight with the rest of us ordinary mortals.

Nor will substituting the infallibility of Lenin for the downgrading of Stalin make any impression on American observers, however sympathetic they might appear. The proof of the proletarian pudding is going to be in the eating, as far as we Americans are concerned; and Civil Liberties are going to be the chief ingredient, not crocodile tears.—Yours.—JOE DOAKES.

## Gil Green's Exciting Book

Editor, Daily Worker:

Gil Green's new book, "The Enemy Forgotten" is the most exciting book I have read in ages. No clichés, no dogmatic approach, it gives one new hope of the possibility for handling a truly American movement for socialism. HOUSEWIFE.