

# Sparks Fly at Old R

## Socialist, Pacifist, Communist, Progressive Discuss America's Road to Peace, Democracy

Under the sponsorship of Fellowship for Reconciliation, a socialist-pacifist organization, four speakers representing diverse views gave their ideas on America's Road to Democracy and Peace at Carnegie Hall, May 27, before some 3,000 people. Although differing on many points, all speakers agreed that the Smith Act should be repealed and its victims freed. The following excerpts are from the prepared speeches of the participants. In the give-and-take following the formal presentation, some of the exchanges were sharper, but even during this phase of the program, the audience got the impression that united action between Socialists, Communists, Pacifists and Liberals was becoming increasingly possible. Norman Thomas, Socialist leader was most vehement against such united action now but conceded that it was possible in the future.

Roger N. Baldwin, former director of the American Civil Liberties Union, was moderator and Charles R. Lawrence, F. O. R. leader was chairman. Participants besides Thomas were Dr. A. J. Muste, secretary emeritus of the F. O. R.; Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist Party; and Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, long time leader of the Progressive and American Labor Parties.

### A. J. Muste

I WISH to begin with an observation about the approach which I am using in this address. I shall have something to say, although our theme is "America's Road to Democracy and World Peace," about the program and activities of the Communist Party as I have observed—perhaps also experienced—and understood them. For it would be childish to ignore or try to obscure the fact that recent developments in the behavior of the governments of the Soviet Union and other Communist lands, events within the Communist movement in other countries and our own, constitute one of the reasons why such a discussion as this with the participants who are on this platform tonight is being held just now. Discussion among human beings is productive precisely in the degree that it is, in the first place, frank and intellectually hard-hitting and in the second place unembittered. . . .

I plead then that not only in this discussion but in human intercourse generally today we should try at least some of the time to think on the former level, that we should together survey the state of the foundations of the houses occasionally.

Even if we should find that they are beyond saving, it would be better that we perish while trying to save them than we should wipe each other out in a gun battle over how the living room furniture is to be arranged or what political bad fellows it is safe to sleep with. . . .

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1. THE way to reach democracy tomorrow is to practice it and live it today. Therefore, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, either organizationally or through the attitudes and activities of its members, has always called upon this nation to adhere to the practice of freedom of thought, speech, press and organization, especially where views generally regarded as mistaken or abhorrent are concerned.

This defense of the right of advocacy and political organization is separate from the question of dealing with subversive action or with behavior which involves "clear and present danger" of illegal action. The fact that in some cases it is difficult for a nation to draw the line is no reason for giving up the effort and seeking to deal with dissent by repression.

This meeting itself is an evidence of the seriousness with which the Fellowship takes its responsibility in the field of civil liberties.

The National Council of F. O. R. has opposed the Smith Act throughout and protested in 1949 against the trial of C.P. leaders under that act. It is with its approval that the petition, for persons convicted or threatened with trial under the

Smith Act has been and is being circulated. The Fellowship has done these things, although with its pacifist basis it is in fundamental disagreement with much in the Communist philosophy and program, although it has a policy of not engaging in "united front" activities.

By various means, including some not yet mentioned such as loyalty oaths, civil liberties have been threatened in recent years. If the U. S. is to maintain and improve its own democracy and advance the cause of democracy and peace in the world, we have to set the example of a people who abide by their own democratic principles. In the degree that we are such a people we shall effectively combat totalitarianism and hold the allegiance of those masses now in revolution in Asia, Africa and Latin America, revolutions largely inspired by traditional American ideals and national independence, liberty and the dignity of the human person.

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2. THE practice of democracy is absolutely inconsistent with racial discrimination, segregation, second-class citizenship. The most inexcusable and most cancerous and perilous blot upon American society today is the existence of these evils in all parts of the land and especially the virulent and violent attempts to defend them by the White Citizens Councils and other such agencies in the South.

3. Fidelity to the tradition of this country—the tradition of anti-colonialism, of the right of people to self-determination, and indeed of revolution if oppression becomes intolerable—would have been required that this country would have been the supporter and inspirer of the popular revolutions which have taken and are taking place in the so-called underdeveloped countries.

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4. A CLOSELY related consideration is that our foreign policy should have welcomed the emergence of nations which sought to keep out of the arms race and to develop their own way of life. We should have been prepared to extend aid to them in solving their vast and complex economic problems and arousing the hope of a new day in the masses of their people.

This aid should not have been conditioned on their being explicitly or implicitly parts of our military orbit. We have to a great degree pursued the opposite policy.

By in effect proclaiming to what might be called Third Camp peoples that they have to line up in one major power bloc or the other, they would not be encouraged or permitted to establish an independent position we have done much to push them into the Communist orbit, whose leaders ostensibly welcome "neutralism."

5. I mention once more such

(Continued on Page 14)



Roundtable phase of forum  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Negro  
and Roger Baldwin, former

### Norman Thomas

THIS SPEECH in tonight's discussion is necessarily less than a balanced statement of my conception, or the Socialist International's, of the road to peace and freedom. My emphasis is on the reasons for our rejection of partnership with the Communist Party in walking that road. Briefly, let me preface my objections to communism by rounding you of my long standing advocacy of universal, controlled disarmament as our best hope of peace.

Recent events have increased my faith that for the sake of our mutual escape from the annihilation implicit in tomorrow's war, the American and Russian governments, before it is too late, may agree to an effective transfer of conflict out of the realm of war by the institution of world-wide disarmament, under a duly authorized authority.

In the field of civil liberties, may I remind you that I have opposed racial discrimination in any part of our American life by every means in my power. I rejoice that the American Communist Party is now allowed to drop that slogan, "Negro self-determination in the Black Belt," which, as I early pointed out, was, in the American scene, an invitation to conditions worse than our present degree of segregation. For saying what Mr. Dennis now has said that communists should believe and say, I was stigmatized in *The Daily Worker* as an advocate of lynching.

My opposition to the Smith Act is well known. I shall debate it with William Buckley under the auspices of the New York Civil Liberties Union on June 7.

Communism, as I shall discuss it, bears little resemblance to the program of sweetness and light presented by Mr. Dennis' report to the National Committee of the Party and doubtless in his speech tonight. If we were to judge simply on this report, such criticisms as democratic socialists might offer would not prevent considerations of united action—or better united actions—in pursuit of peace and freedom. But one such report cannot decisively change the philosophy and practice of the international communist movement, and it has revealed itself in the tragic years since World War I. Indeed, it is highly significant that the report, was not issued by the

# Fashioned Forum at Carnegie Hall



when principals on platform at Carnegie Hall, sharply question each other. Left to right: Dr. A. J. Muste, secretary emeritus, Socialist Party; Norman Thomas, often Socialist Party presidential candidate; Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist Party; Prof. Charles R. Lawrence of Brooklyn College, secretary of F. O. R.; and head of the American Civil Liberties Union.

American Communist high command until after Moscow had given the signal for stripping Stalin of claim to absolute reverence and obedience which was the distinguishing brand of the true communist everywhere.

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**BUT HOWEVER** hopeful for the future may be the end of Stalin worship, if men were logical it would have shattered the very foundations of communism. For communism has been a rigid secular religion of secular salvation through implicit obedience to the Party's commands. The ultimate goal might be a general achievement of earthly bliss, but now not only individuals and their rights, but justice and truth as commonly understood are expendable.

None of the leaders now repent; none of them asks forgiveness of God or man. They merely make Stalin the scapegoat, and in so doing acknowledge the awful wickedness of the basic philosophy which made them his docile tools. They now relax certain controls; they seem to be abandoning the worst forms of their revival of chattel slavery in the terrible work camps to which hundreds of thousands of men and women had been sent without any proper trial or hearing.

They are now "rehabilitating" some of the hundreds of thousands whom they helped to liquidate. But they extend this belated apology to none of their socialist antagonists — not, for instance, to those Polish Jewish heroes, Ehrlich and Alter, killed by Communists during the war against Hitler in which those great socialist leaders, despite their outrageous imprisonment by Stalin when he was Hitler's ally, were preaching the united front to their comrades.

Let me make it plain. As an American and a Socialist, I believe that in and out of the UN we must of necessity negotiate with Communist governments on those approaches to disarmament and peace upon which the very life of mankind depends. Nevertheless, I am not yet convinced that they and the international communist movement which they lead have changed the views expressed not only by Stalin but by Lenin. These views can be summarized in this quotation from the declaration of the Sixth World Congress:

"The Soviet Union harbors no illusions as to possibility of durable peace. Wars between proletarian and bourgeois states will ne-

cessarily arise. Leninism combats all pacifist theories concerning the abolition of war. Wars of proletarian dictatorship against world capitalism are inevitable and revolutionary."

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**TO TURN FROM** world shaking events to our own history, let me summarize our Socialist experience with Communist united fronts. If I speak personally it is not because I feel myself peculiarly aggrieved or peculiarly important but because my experiences illustrate Communist procedures.

Early in 1934, Communists here in New York broke up with violence a Socialist meeting in behalf of the worker victims of Dollfuss' fascism in Vienna. Later that year they scurrilously cartooned, lampooned Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and myself because we were photographed shaking hands at a meeting on housing at which we both spoke.

A few months later, Earl Browder, returning from Moscow, announced the new policy, and by 1936 he was running for President in a campaign avowedly intended to help Mr. Roosevelt win. In that united front period, I was chairman of a joint committee for the defense of Terzani, an Italian anti-fascist refugee, falsely charged by Art Smith, leader of the Klaki Shirts of America, with murder in a brawl at a meeting.

The committee, who wanted a martyr rather than vindication of the innocent, broke an agreement, and at a mass meeting urged picketing the Queens County Court House—which might easily have lost the case. We finally won. We stopped such picketing. But the Communists broke up the committee rather than let it press for the indictment of Art Smith with appeals to the Governor and the Bar Association for help. These appeals Carlo Tresca and I successfully made as individuals.

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**I MUST LEAVE** history, and looking to the future ask Mr. Dennis the following questions:

1—How far does the Party go in repudiating the positions to some of which I have drawn attention in Foster's *Toward a Soviet America* and J. Peters' *Manual*?

2—How completely does the Party repudiate or modify the statement I quoted from the Sixth Congress on the illusion of peace, or Lenin's statement, before he came to power that every "peace program" is a deception. (Central Committee Proposals submitted to)

(Continued on Page 14)

## Eugene Dennis

**I BELIEVE I** express the sentiments of all of us that this is a unique and welcome occasion. Whatever the divergence of views expressed tonight, and no matter how many loaded questions are bandied about, the important thing is that such a meeting as this takes place at all.

We are discussing here tonight an American road to democracy and peace. The position of my party is that peace, democracy and security are indivisible and ultimately will be assured through the socialist reorganization of society. The giant industrial and peaceful power of atomic energy and the infinite possibilities of automation—these are already harbingers of the future system. These powers are too vast with their boundless potentialities for good or evil to be left in private hands motivated chiefly by profit and greed. They belong in the hands of the people.

We Communists look forward to the day when the majority of Americans can come into full control of their own destinies.

All this will take place in ways native to our own country and its popular traditions.

Our concept of the American path to socialism began to develop years ago. It is now confirmed by the new relationships in the world, as well as by the prospects of tomorrow. We firmly believe that the American Socialist Cooperative Commonwealth, in which the means of production of trustified industry will be publicly owned and operated, can be achieved by our people through constitutional and democratic processes. We advocate and strive to help the transformation of the Presidency and Congress into democratic institutions of, by and for the people.

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**HOWEVER,** in discussing long-range plans for the future, we cannot afford to lose sight of the present reality. The American people who do not yet share our socialist perspectives, are looking for a road today—in this year of 1956—to advance towards peace and democracy. Can such a road be found? We Communists believe it can.

World tensions have relaxed in the last year or so. The words "Geneva" and "Bandung" have come to symbolize humanity's hopes of peace. Today virtually everyone can see

that Dulles' brink of war policy has reached a dead-end. Peaceful co-existence—to live and live as good neighbors—this is the policy which must replace the bankrupt concentration on the arms race and the cold war.

One may admire or dislike the USSR and the People's Republic of China. One may approve or disapprove the historic fact that socialism is today a world system making its influence and experience felt among the peoples everywhere. One may accept the fact that the harmful violations of socialist justice recently revealed in the Soviet Union—violations which we Communists deplore—were departures from socialist principles and are now being rectified; or one may take the opposite view. But the genuine national interests of our country and the cause of world peace require that we learn to co-exist with all states. This is the only road to lasting peace. There is no other.

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**ONE THING** that Americans recognized in the days of the New Deal was that for most of our people, democracy had become something of an abstraction unless they had the right to a job. We have an unequalled industrial and technological development. But automation and speedup are displacing tens of thousands of workers.

The so-called "sick-industries" are already pools of unemployment. And the economic system can, at any moment—and, in fact, will, sooner or later, stagger, and shut down plants and machines and leave millions a prey to depression, as is already tragically foreshadowed by the vast layoffs in Michigan.

Thus the struggle of labor, the farmers and middle classes for a greater degree of economic security is an essential prerequisite for the advance of the American people along the road of democracy.

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**I COME NOW** to the most bitter failing of our American democracy. How utterly inadequate and lacking it is to the heroic Negro people, and even to most of the white people, in the South—a region which has such a great but unrealized potential!

The magnificent battle to democratize the South, the heroic fight against segregation and the open shop in the Deep South, above all by the Negro freedom movement in Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia—which enlisted the support of millions of Negro and white Amer-

icans, North and South—is now the pivotal struggle to assure democratic advance for the whole country.

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**WE COMMUNISTS** not only subscribe to democracy. We have fought for it. We fought for it in countless ways: to build the unions, to free the Scottsboro Boys and the Trenton Six, to defend Republican Spain, to defeat the fascist Axis, and to rout McCarthyism.

One may agree or disagree with the Communist philosophy and program. But, as recent history has demonstrated, when we Communists are deprived of our constitutional rights, the rights of ALL are endangered.

As is well known, the process set in motion with the loyalty oaths and Smith Act indictments against Communists soon spread to include the main targets of the reactionary forces: organized labor, liberals, democratic-minded conservatives, and—not least of all, the Negro people and the NAACP, which has now been declared illegal in several states of the deep South.

Thus, stated briefly, we Communists believe that an American road to peace and democracy today lies through:

First: peaceful co-existence, disarmament, and the outlawing of atomic weapons;

Second: expanded social and economic security; and a 30-hour work week with no reduction in pay;

Third: full and complete equality for the Negro people; their complete integration in all phases of American life; and

Fourth, but certainly not least: the defense and enforcement of the Constitution and Bill of Rights for all Americans.

**I DO NOT SEEK** tonight to relive, nor relish the past; nor to revive its negative features. Many liberal and labor forces are re-evaluating the past and seeking to learn from it, and seriously weigh their own responsibilities for some

(Continued on Page 14)

## W. E. B. DuBois

**THE UNITED STATES,** which would like to be regarded as a democracy devoted to peace, finds itself today making the greatest preparations for war of any nation on earth and approaching a national election where most citizens will have no opportunity to vote for the policies which they prefer.

This conference is proposing to examine the causes of this contradictory situation. First, we know that our main reason in preparing for war is the fact that slowly but surely socialism has spread over the world and become a workable form of government. Today for the first time in history that majority of mankind live under socialist regimes. Most Americans apparently believe that this spread of socialism is the result of a conspiracy led by the Soviet Union and abetted by a section of American citizens. For fear of this group and of the Soviet Union, we have curtailed democratic government, limited civil liberties, and planned war on a gigantic scale.

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**THE spread** of socialism in the last one hundred years is unquestionably a fact. It stemmed from growing protest against that tremendous expansion of business enterprise which followed the French revolution. This private initiative and economic anarchy resulted in the factory system, the American slave trade, the sugar empire and the cotton kingdom.

All this was concurrent with such suffering and degradation among the laboring masses that by the end of the 19th Century there was hardly a man of thought and feeling, scarcely a scientist nor an artist, who did not believe that so-

(Continued on Page 14)

(Continued from Page 9)

cialism must eventually supplant unbridled private capitalism or civilization would die. By socialism, most thinkers meant such limitation of property rights and control of industry by the government as would make public welfare and not private profit the object of work and of the saving of capital.

All over the earth since the Civil War in America, socialism has grown and spread and become more and more definite. It has emerged from dream and doctrinaire fantasy such as characterized Fourier and St. Simon into the rounded doctrine of Karl Marx and finally into the socialist states of Lenin and Mao Tse-tung.

IN ALL this struggling advance lay the central idea that men must work for a living but that the results of their work must not mainly be to support privileged persons and concentrate power in the hands of the owners of wealth; that the welfare of the mass of people should be the main object of government!

The difficulty of accomplishing this lay in the current culture patterns and inexperience of the mass of people even in the most advanced nations and in the inherited belief that nothing better than private ownership of capital could be planned with human nature as it is.

DEMOCRATIC control, therefore, in the most advanced countries, while it increased, tended to be political rather than economic. It had to do with selection of officials rather than with work and income. Discovery of new natural forces and increased use of machines with intricate industrial techniques tended to put land, labor, and the ownership of capital into control of the few who were fortunate or aggressive or unscrupulous and to emphasize a belief that while the mass of citizens might share in government by electing officials to administer law and legislators might make laws in certain areas of government, the people could not control industry.

As science increased its mastery of nature; as industry began to use world trade to expand markets; an entirely new problem of government arose.

Industry realized that unless world-wide industrial organization largely controlled government, it could not control land and labor, monopolize materials, set prices in the world market, and regulate credit and currency.

For this purpose new and integrated world industry arose called "Big Business"—a misleading misnomer. Its significance lay not simply in its size. It was not just little shops grown larger. It was an organized super-government of mankind in matters of work and wage, directed with science and skill for private profit. It could not be controlled by popular vote unless that vote was intelligent, experienced, and cast by persons essentially equal in income and power. The overwhelming majority of mankind was ignorant, sick, and poverty stricken. . . .

THE mass of Southerners do

not vote. In the Congressional District where Till was murdered, there live 400,000 Negroes and 300,000 whites. Yet only 7,000 votes went to the polls to elect the present Congressman. The disfranchisement of the black half of the labor vote in the South keeps Negroes poor, sick and ignorant. But it also hurts white labor by making democratic government unworkable if the South has from three to ten times the voting power of the North and West.

Because of this systematic and illegal disfranchisement, a majority of American voters can often be outvoted by a minority and laws like the McCarran and Smith Acts can become illegal statutes, because a minority of voters can prevail over a majority. Figures to prove this are easy to adduce, but I only mention now the fact that Senator Lehman represents the vote of five million citizens, while Senator Eastland represents less than 150,000 voters.

THE loss of democratic control of the government of our nation can be even more clearly demonstrated.

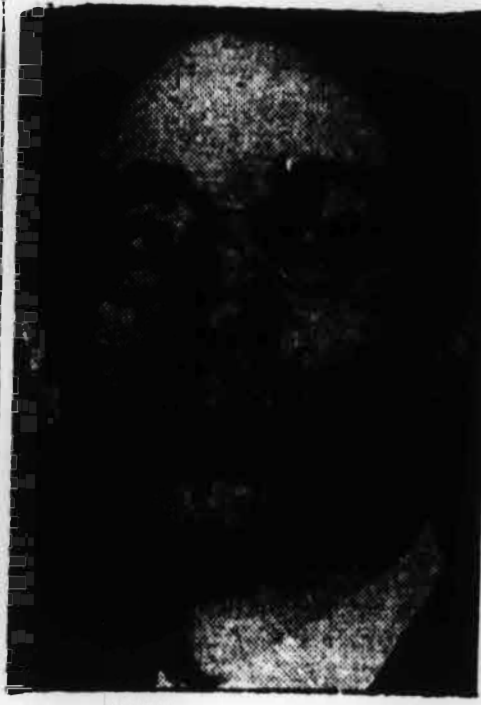
There will be no effective candidate for the Presidency in November who stands pledged for peace, disarmament, abolition of the draft, lower taxes, recognition of the right of the Soviet Union and China to have the government which they choose and for stopping our effort to force other nations to do as we want them to do.

Not only will we have no chance thus to decide our foreign policy, but we will be equally helpless in deciding our course in domestic affairs. Our system of education is falling to pieces. We need teachers and schoolhouses by the millions, but we cannot have them if we continue making weapons at the present rate and setting our youth to learning death and destruction instead of building, healing and teaching. . . .

IN ORDER to let the nation return to normal sanity we must realize that socialism is not a crime nor a conspiracy, but the path of progress toward which the feet of all mankind are set.

The footsteps of these long oppressed and staggering masses are not always straight and sure; but their mistakes can never cause the misery and disaster which the factory system caused in Europe, colonial imperialism has caused in Asia and Africa and which slavery, lynching, disfranchisement, and jimcrow have caused in the United States.

Our way out of this impasse is straight and clear and as old as the struggle of freedom for the mind of man. Americans must face the facts at all costs. Walking with determination through this morass of deliberate distortion, we must insist on the right to know the truth, to discuss it and to listen to its interpretation by men of intelligence and honesty; we must restore to all citizens their civil rights and the right to vote, no matter whether they are Negroes, Communists, or naturalized foreign-born. We must insist that our foreign policy as well as our domestic problems and especially our problem of industry be subjects on which we may and must vote.



DR. A. J. MUSTE

**THOMAS**

(Continued from Page 8) Socialist Conference, April 1916.)

3—Will the Party urge on established Communist governments the end of totalitarianism and the one party state?

4—Will the Party urge on the Kremlin rehabilitation of the Kalmycks, Baltic peoples, and other victims of ruthless Communist Party imperialism?

5—Will the Party urge on all Communist governments the release of those who we call political prisoners and their rehabilitation?

6—Will the Party urge on the Polish government and its Moscow masters the award of posthumous honor to Stalin's victims, Ehrlich and Alter, and permission of Polish Jews to re-establish the heroic Jewish Socialist Bund, along with other open and above-board political parties?

7—Will the Party urge on Moscow acceptance of those forms of inspection and control which are essential to obtaining and enforcing universal and controlled disarmament?

The correct answers to these questions in word and deed are worth a thousand speeches illustrative of the latest turn in party line by grace of Moscow.

**DENNIS**

(Continued from Page 9) of the regrettable developments and divisions of the past decade. This timely reappraisal comes from such diverse individuals as Dean Acheson, Milton Mayer and many other liberals and progressives.

As for us Communists, for some time now we have been in the midst of a self-critical examination of our program and policies. We are taking note of instances of dogmatism and a certain intolerance of criticism from others. Not least of all, we are cognizant of our former mistaken position towards the civil liberties of some of our political opponents, as in the Katcher case.

These reassessments in all circles are altogether appropriate, for our country is on the eve of big changes. I believe my friends here will agree that new winds are blowing and mighty forces are at work in the land today. They are visible in Detroit. They are visible in the rural mid-West. They march with persuasion and dignity in Montgomery, Ala.

MORE THAN one hundred years ago, several pro-Union and conservative anti-slavery leaders came to see ex-President Martin Van Buren (no flaming radical by far), and asked his advice in whether they should work with the Abolitionists and the early Marxists. Van Buren replied: "You must be very strong if you are already picking and choosing. I had supposed we wanted every man who is opposed to the expansion of slavery. . . ."

It is in this spirit that I offer my views tonight. For I see ahead to an American Left and a broad democratic alliance—revitalized, chastened and strengthened—emerging again to help shape the great objectives of a better America in a world at peace.

(Continued from Page 8)

item of policy. Liberals and progressives generally admit that the U. S. has greatly over-emphasized the military struggle against Russia and Communism to the grave neglect of the economic, political, ideological and spiritual aspects. Virtually everybody, including the Eisenhower Administration by implication, now admits that the U. S. is coming off very badly in the contest.

WE HAVE repeatedly called on our nation—unilaterally if necessary—to abandon this whole approach. What is the point of "peace" talk blared from behind respective stockpiles of H-bombs, I ask you? Certainly I call now for an end by this country to the obscene business of trying to produce more ghastly ones as fast as possible.

We have also repeatedly called for an honest and serious study of non-violence as a means of dealing with aggression and of overcoming injustice and oppression. When you consider the dilemma mankind now faces it is not fantastic that practical men, including the leading religious leaders, do not regard non-violence as something to study and experiment with?

It will be a still more astonishing phenomena if this continues to be the case after the eyes of so many here and abroad have been fixed upon the remarkable struggle waged non-violently and in love by the Negroes of Montgomery.

IN CONCLUSION, two remarks. It is clear, for one thing, that we have made a very radical criticism of U. S. policy. It is implied that "peace" is not a simple and easily achieved objective and that if the U. S. is to contribute toward this end its policy, its existence will have to undergo drastic changes. Nobody wants war, nuclear or otherwise. But the idea that peace can be achieved by the familiar formula of "co-existence" between two power states and social regimes remaining substantially as they are now is a superficial notion and can be misleading and dangerous. The struggle for peace is necessarily a struggle for basic social change.

This, finally, applies as well to Russia, China and the Communist movement generally. I do not want to encourage a compulsive and irrational negative evaluation of these things or a blind fury to destroy by whatever means and whatever the consequences. If one reflects for a moment on what is being openly admitted about Stalinism today and then reflects upon the gains Communism has made and is making, one can only observe with sorrow and even shame the opposition from democratic—shall we say also Christian—quarters must have been weak indeed or Communism would hardly have drawn hundreds upon hundreds of millions of human beings under its influence and sway.

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