

Accused Assassin Belied Tenets Of Marxism, Experts Here Agree

Norman Thomas Joins Other Socialists in Saying Marx Opposed Personal Violence as a Means to Ends

By PETER KIHSS

Political groups that consider themselves to be the exponents of Marxism contended here yesterday that Marxism opposed assassinations or individual terrorism. Thus they argued that the man accused of assassinating President Kennedy was not a true "Marxist," despite his own assertions to that effect.

The groups expressed concern over misconceptions that might arise because Lee H. Oswald had styled himself a "Marxist" in a much-discussed telecast in New Orleans. They also noted that an engineer whose wife had befriended Oswald's wife and children had said that Oswald "refused to eschew violence."

Norman Thomas, six-time Socialist candidate for President, and leaders of the Communist, Socialist Workers and Socialist-Labor parties and the Progressive Labor Movement all contended that true Marxism opposed violence against individuals.

Ideas of Marx Cited

They cited Karl Marx, the German socialist, as having long battled terrorists such as Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian anarchist who believed in destroying the state.

Marx's program for achieving socialism, they held in substance, envisioned a class struggle, with the individual counting for relatively little. In contrast, some of them pictured capitalism as promoting the idea of the individual as architect of his fate, and reactionaries as believing that destruction of individuals might affect social change.

Apart from the socialistic leaders, Dr. Sidney Hook, professor of philosophy at New York University, agreed that "Marxist theory does not believe in individual violence as a method of social change and transformation."

"However," Professor Hook said, "many Marxists would on occasion not condemn an individual act of violence if it served some important social purpose. But they would condemn most actions of violence, especially on the ground that they would act as provocations or pretexts for repressive measures."

Trotsky's Slaying Noted

Professor Hook as well as

others consider the late Joseph Stalin, Soviet dictator, responsible for the killing of his rival, Leon Trotsky. Trotsky was killed while in exile in Mexico in August, 1940, by an alpenstock plunged into his brain.

Dr. Hook said there had been "hundreds" of such individual killings and said that "some people who call themselves Communists" were using such individual violence at present in democratic Venezuela.

Earl Browder, expelled former general secretary of the United States Communist party, who was its Presidential candidate in two elections, said he was sure that Stalin had "practiced" individual terrorism, although Stalin "never defended it."

Farrell Dobbs, national secretary of the Socialist Workers party and its Presidential candidate in the last four elections, said that the killing of Trotsky had "refuted Stalin's contention that he had remained a Marxist."

Arnold Petersen, national secretary of the Socialist Labor party, said that Marx had held Bakunin and other anarchists in "supreme contempt."

He quoted a letter Marx wrote to his daughter Jenny on April 11, 1881, in which he said that another anarchist, John Most, "and other childish whimperers preach tyrannicide as a 'theory and panacea.'"

Horrified by Killing

An editorial in the forthcoming issue of The Weekly People, edited by Eric Hass, Socialist Labor candidate for President in the last three elections, expresses horror over the assassination of President Kennedy.

"It is this deep-seated, guilt-inspired, ruling class fear," the editorial says, "that created the

climate in which it is commonplace for overwrought, unstable and mentally unbalanced characters to commit irrational acts of violence.

"They have had it drilled into their weak minds by the incessant propaganda of capitalism that, on the one hand, the individual is the architect of his own fate, and, on the other, that evil men, (or those whom the irrational victims of capitalist madness imagine to be evil) are responsible for their private miseries and for the world's woes."

Reds Quote Own Charter

Arnold Johnson, a spokesman for the Communist party of the U. S. A., said the party's constitution advocates a peaceful road to socialism through "the developing constitutional process."

It calls for expulsion of any one "who advocates force or violence or terrorism."

"We constantly," Mr. Johnson said, "see the role of the working class and of the mass movements and mass struggles of the people as decisive. We always warn against any shortcuts, any methods of individual terror, individual acts which divert from and would basically prove defeating both as to immediate as well as to ultimate objectives."

For the Trotskyites, Mr. Dobbs said Trotsky had written a pamphlet in 1934 on "The Kirov Assassination," in which he cited "the negative aspect of Marxism towards the tactics of individual terror."

Backs Majority Decision

"The only way that the political and basic social problems of the human race can be settled in a civilized way," Mr. Dobbs said, "is for society to be guided by majority decision which is reached after full and free public debate in which all points of view are heard."

"Individual acts of terrorism in the last analysis can serve only the forces of reaction who want to repress political and constitutional liberties because they seize upon the individual terrorist act as a pretext to attack the rights of society as a whole."

Miss Betty Elkin, national secretary of the Socialist party, described the party as a "multi-tendency" and with non-Marxist as well as Marxist members. Then she said:

"The Socialist party has always firmly and unequivocally rejected violence such as assassination and terrorism, against political opponents, as being utterly contrary to Socialist principles and incompatible with membership in the Socialist party."

Rejects All Violence

"Assassination, terrorism and

