

The Expanding Struggle for Socialism

By MAX GORDON

WHILE COMMUNISTS throughout the world have in recent years been placing increasing emphasis on the possibility of a peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism, the ideologists of capitalism have been placing increasing emphasis on the substitution of force to prevent socialism.

An article in the N.Y. Times of May 13 is a case in point. The article, written from Bangkok, Thailand by Robert Alden, discusses the "danger of peaceful conquests by the Communists of the newly democratic states of Southeast Asia."

He reviews the situation in Burma, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, South Viet Nam. As is customary with such ideologists, he suggests that the Communists win votes by kidding the people into believing that "the rich live in big houses and have a lot of land and a lot of money, while peasants and workers have hardly any land

and hardly any money." Some kidding!

The peasants and workers, it seems, are "naive." If someone points these things out to them and promises to remedy them, they vote for him.

Since the point of the complaint is that they were for Communists, one must draw the conclusion that only the Communists point these things out and promise to remedy them.

The situation is sorely troubling "informed and responsible" leaders of these countries, Alden reports. And so in Burma, where the Communists gained 30 percent of the vote in the recent election, Premier U Nu is considering postponement of all future elections until it can be guaranteed that the Communists won't win.

In Indochina, Premier Diem of South Vietnam has a more direct approach. "Any Communist voice that is raised is silenced by the police. Arrests of Communist agents are made around the clock." And Diem

denies the Communists "privileges normally enjoyed in a democratic society."

The Communist position has always been that the working-class aims to establish socialism by peaceful means, but the capitalist class seeks to prevent this by destroying the democratic process in order to maintain its power. It does so either before the workingclass wins power, as it sees that class political strength grow. Or it tries to stage a violent counter-revolution if the workingclass succeeds in winning power.

For many years, following the Russian Revolution, the emphasis was placed not on the peaceful path, desired by the workers, but the violent path sought by the bourgeoisie to block socialism. This emphasis was in part due to a mistaken acceptance of the Russian experience as the pattern for every country, and in part to a revulsion against the class collaborationist policies of Social Democracy.

Following the development of the People's Front tactic against fascism in 1935, however, Communists began to place more and more emphasis on the peaceful road the workers want to take, while still considering that this road would inevitably be blocked by the force and violence of the bourgeoisie.

Recently, however, as socialism has been rapidly gaining strength on a world scale, and capitalism constantly growing weaker, Communists have been drawing the conclusion that it is by no means inevitable that the capitalist class will always have the power to stage effective counter-revolution. This is by no means to say that this class will go along, that it will not have the will to block workingclass power by violent means. The issue is whether it will have the capacity to do so.

For the same reason that the Communists have been seeing the possibility of peaceful transition, the increasing strength of

socialism, capitalist ideologists are being forced to define their advocacy of force to block this transition. For some time, they tried to evade the question of their attitude toward democracy when it leads to Communist victories at the polls. The expanding possibility makes this evasion impossible.

In practice, they have succeeded in overthrowing democratically-elected governments in several small countries, even where they were not Communist but simply tolerated Communists. The question is how long they can continue doing this, and whether they can do it where major countries are concerned.

In any case, it is clear that Communists in such countries as ours are confronted not only with the job of preserving the parliamentary, democratic process in their own countries, but in blocking interference by their capitalist classes, in the democratic processes of other nations.