

This is not what we are already doing. Our Communist Party still has peculiar elements of economism in its thought and practice.

Starting from the understanding that Socialism is not won by propaganda speeches, some Communists have come to elevate the day-to-day struggles to the exclusion of the fight to win the minds of the working-class. There has gradually entered the tendency to view the party as a small and disciplined elite, in possession (as Marxists) of a correct understanding of the needs, interests, and way forward for the working-class. To some degree the purity of the party's doctrine has been ensured by an exacting orthodoxy and a highly centralised structure, which has acted as a barrier to the growth of the party itself, and hedged round the initiatives of its members among the masses. Stalinism, and the cult both of authority and of the Party associated with it, have hardened these attitudes in Britain also. Hence, the Communist tends to see his role as being largely that of building influence and connections with the masses and within mass organisations, for some period when economic crisis or external pressure will bring a mass following which the elite will steer to power.

Certainly, we should not slacken in any way our mass activity around industrial and social issues. Certainly, Socialism will not come by converting twenty million people to Marxism by lectures and street-corner propaganda. But we do suggest that it is urgent that we break sharply with the outlook which sees these struggles as ends in themselves, as means for building the party, as incidents within a never-ending perspective of defending living standards within a capitalist framework, alongside many years of peaceful co-existence and peaceful competition.

It is necessary now to mount a propaganda such as has not been seen in this country for many years to win the minds of the British people for Socialism; and it is necessary to mount it in ways that take fully into account the intelligence, experience, democratic traditions, and organisational maturity of the British working-class.

It is imperative to rebuff the actions of British imperialism in Cyprus and at Suez; but at the same time to explain as never before the nature of imperialism and its general weakness.

It is necessary to resist in every way the suffering brought upon the British workers by the introduction of automation; but it is also necessary to explain in a new, sharp, and imaginative manner the general character of monopoly capitalism and the perspectives opened to a Socialist society by automation and nuclear power.

It is necessary to struggle to defend and improve existing living standards; but it is necessary to generate anew - and especially among our youth - the understanding that Socialism is not to be measured in living standards alone, but in new social relations, new values and opportunities, a new, more generous, more just, and less selfish way of life. We should recall more often the words of Maxim Gorky:

"It is well known that a characteristic and inherent peculiarity of bourgeois society lies in the fact that the overwhelming majority of its members must expend all their energy in obtaining the most primitive necessities of life. People have become used to this accursed and humiliating 'peculiarity' of their existence and although it drives them to concentrate on themselves and think only of themselves, only a very few understand the monstrous nature of such a social order."

It has been this clear conception of a new society which has given inspiration and staying-power to Socialists and Communists in earlier years. It is the violation of important aspects of this vision which - half-suspected, half-understood - has blurred the vigour of our imaginative appeal in recent years; and which, now fully known but still imperfectly explained, has caused some Communists to stop dead in their tracks.

We have no ready-made solutions to this problem which events have forced upon us. We claim only that the problem must be faced: and there must be discussion. The result of this discussion, we hope, will be the liberation of great political energies, the re-emergence of Socialist principle with a new vigour in Britain.

A reader from Colchester gives us encouragement:

"As for 'unity', is there no-one sufficiently Marxist to ask 'unity for what?' Unity for unity's sake seems as uninspiring a slogan as it is sterile. I think the unity of conscious and informed purpose in the struggle for socialism and communism is the only unity worth having, and that can only be promoted by such important and basic debate as I see in The Reasoner."

We think he is right. Clearly, he - and all readers - know the urgent need for common unity in action of all possible sections in immediate struggles against the Tory Government, around Suez, in the coming industrial battles.

But this is not the same as questions of organisational and political unity of Socialists. This can come only through open discussion, in good faith. It will not come by slurring over past or present disagreements.

The crisis of British imperialism is real enough now, and laid open before all eyes: its repercussions upon British industry may soon provoke a rapid sharpening of political consciousness among the British working-class: the abatement of the Cold War has given us a brief breathing-space. The seriousness of immediate, and impending, political and industrial issues makes it more, and not less, urgent that we get the equipment of our Socialist theory sharp and into good order. The gathering threat to British living standards makes it more, rather than less, urgent that we should contest all propaganda which seeks to fool the British people into the belief that there is any long-term solution to their problems within the framework of monopoly capitalism. If the mock battles of Gaitskell on the one hand, and the "Stalin business" on the other, have brought the ideals of Socialism into discredit with sections of our working people, it becomes our first duty to re-assert them in their full truth and power.

The unity required is that of the gathering of Socialist forces, the renewal of Socialist understanding, for the final assault upon British imperialism itself. Such an assault can only be carried by those who, like Cromwell's soldiers, "know what they fight for, and love what they know." It is our hope that The Reasoner will strengthen their number.

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from the first issue.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT 'THE REASONER'?By Ronald L. Meek

Whether one approves of The Reasoner or not, one can hardly ignore it. To brush it aside as unimportant, or to deal with it as if it were merely an expression of the views of a handful of disgruntled intellectuals, would be the height of stupidity. Anyone with a smattering of Marxism (to say nothing of eyes and ears) must surely recognise that the appearance of The Reasoner reflects a very real crisis in our party - a crisis which, as the evidence of several party aggregates shows, extends far beyond the ranks of the intellectuals.

What then should be our attitude towards The Reasoner? This question cannot be answered without saying something about the reasons for the growth of the great concern and bewilderment which exists in our party to-day.

It would be quite wrong to date all of this concern and bewilderment from the 20th Congress. The waters had been accumulating behind the dam for many years: Kruschov did not do very much more than open the flood-gates. It was not at all easy to be a Communist in the days of the purges, the Nazi-Soviet pact, the anti-cosmopolitan campaign, the break with Jugoslavia, the Rajk trial and the 'doctors' plot'. All too often our press and propaganda discussed events such as these in terms which gave colour to the claim that our party represented Russian interests rather than British. All too often it exaggerated the achievements of the Soviet Union, covering up its blemishes and talking about it as if it were a sort of outpost of British liberalism. And all too often those of us who criticised these practices were treated somewhat coldly (to say the least of it) by the leadership, and our criticisms remained largely unpublished.

All this, together with the prevailing tendency towards dogmatism and doctrinal rigidity, lost our party a number of members and a great deal of support. Those of us who remained loyal to the party, and continued to work for it, did so for a number of different reasons. Some of us, no doubt, were ignorant of the real facts about the unpleasant things which were going on in the Soviet Union: it was not at that time quite as easy as some comrades now assume it to have been to separate fact from fiction. Others of us, possibly the majority, knew some of these facts and were very worried about them, but remained loyal to the party because of the apparent lack of any alternative party capable of leading the British working class to Socialism, and because of the continuing need to defend the great achievements of the Soviet Union against capitalist attack. A small minority of us gradually came to know most of the facts and protested about them, but at the same time tried to look at them from a Marxist viewpoint, realising that many of the errors and abuses and restrictions on liberty had their roots in certain objective conditions, and foreseeing that they would begin to wither away when these conditions disappeared.

As the facts became more and more widely known, the solidarity which the party continued to display in public came to conceal a greater and greater volume of doubt and scepticism. This should on no account be exaggerated: there was no disagreement over such things as the need to defend peace, end colonialism, defeat the Tories, and work for Socialism in Britain, which were and remain our most important practical tasks. But the accumulation of doubt and scepticism was at any rate sufficiently great, when it was finally released and intensified by the Kruschov revelations, to bring about a real crisis in our party - a crisis in which many of us are being forced to undertake agonising re-appraisals not only of the Soviet Union but also of some of the very fundamentals of Communist theory and practice.

The reactions of our comrades during the past six months have been very varied. A few, disgusted at having for so long defended certain things which now appear to them indefensible, have left the party. Others, at the opposite extreme, have stolidly refused to discuss "the Stalin business" and its implications at any length, on the grounds that it is not

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relevant to the party's struggle in Britain. The majority, however, have stayed in the party and worried about "the Stalin business" a great deal. Amid all the confusion and scepticism, certain fairly definite attitudes have emerged, which may perhaps be classified under the two headings of "conservative" and "radical". On the "conservative" side are ranged those who believe that the amount of re-thinking that has to be done is not really very great; that although certain things which happened in the Soviet Union were deplorable, our general attitude towards the Soviet Union in the past was not all that wrong and does not need to be changed very much in the future; that the structure and methods of organisation of the party are basically correct, although no doubt in need of some modifications; and that the existing body of Marxist theory is quite capable, with perhaps a little development here and there, of dealing adequately with the problems of liberty and morality which recent events have brought into prominence. On the "radical" side, the views are much more diverse, although there is fairly general agreement that the amount of re-thinking and self-criticism that has to be done is much greater than the "conservative" side is at the moment prepared to admit. On the question of the Soviet Union, some comrades concentrate on blaming themselves and others on blaming the leadership; others feel that the exposure of past errors has not gone far enough; others again seek the basic cause of our wrong attitude towards the Soviet Union in our failure to use Marxism in the analysis of developments in that country. On the question of party organisation, views range from that which suggests that the principle of democratic centralism is anachronistic and should be discarded, to that which suggests that while the principle itself is still basically correct we need a great deal more democracy and a great deal less centralism. On the question of the adequacy of Marxist theory, we again meet a variety of views, but the majority of the "radicals" would agree that the development of Marxism has to a large extent been inhibited in the past by the various practices which are nowadays subsumed under the title "the cult of the individual"; that facile solutions to the problem of liberty under Socialism are greatly to be deplored; and that something like a renaissance of creative Marxism is an urgent necessity if our party is to be able to fulfil what we have always regarded as its historic task.

The tragedy of all this is, of course, that the differences of opinion which I have been describing might have been greatly minimised, and the crisis largely averted, if the affair had been properly handled. If our party had had its ear to the ground a little more during the past three or four years, and had taken a little more notice of those who spoke of the important developments taking place in the Soviet Union, the Krushov speech would have come as less of a shock. If that speech had been less one-sided and superficial, if it had contained fewer exaggerations, half truths and personal trivia, if it had gone even part of the way towards a Marxist interpretation of the facts which it disclosed, and if the Soviet party had taken brother parties more into its confidence about it, we would have been better prepared to meet the shock and to turn the feeling which it was bound to arouse into more constructive channels. If the early statements of our own press and leadership had been more self-critical, if they had not taken Soviet documents quite so much at their face value, if . . . but one could multiply these "ifs" almost indefinitely without helping very much to get us out of the present crisis. Just as the first stage of Socialism did not always develop in the way we should have liked, so the transition to the new and higher stage of Socialism is coming about in a way which is very different from what most of us expected or wished. The habits of thought of a lifetime, whether in the Soviet party or any other, cannot be completely altered overnight. The essential point is that whether we like it or not, whether it could have been avoided or not, a crisis exists, and it is the duty of every comrade to help the party to surmount it.

In this crisis, I think it is fair to say that the "conservative" view is essentially that of the majority of the leadership, and the "radical" views are those of a very large number of rank-and-file members whose opinions are reflected - although sometimes in a very distorted way - in The Reasoner. In saying this, I have no wish to undervalue the growing

Two Views on "The Reasoner" - Continued

degree of independence and maturity which our press and public statements have displayed since the 20th Congress, or the fairness with which the public controversy seems to have been so far conducted. I feel personally that the accusations against the leadership made by some of the contributors to the first number of The Reasoner, although every now and then they rang a distinct bell, were grossly exaggerated. Nevertheless, it does seem to me that the leadership has not yet shown a sufficient appreciation of the magnitude of the problems which have to be solved and the re-thinking which has to be done - in other words, that it has underestimated the extent of the crisis in our party of which the appearance of The Reasoner is one of the most spectacular and important reflections.

What then should we do about The Reasoner? I do not think that we should dismiss out of hand the idea that a journal like The Reasoner can continue to exist and circulate within the party, providing room for contributions to the present discussion which our official press, with its limited space, is unable to accommodate. The principle of independent publication involved here ought to be the subject of party-wide public discussion before any decision is arrived at. Nor do I think that we should concentrate too much attention on the somewhat unorthodox manner in which The Reasoner made its appearance. Personally, I believe that its editors have acted very irresponsibly, and that their tactics have been incredibly bad. But to concentrate on this aspect of the matter, and to ignore the fact that the editors, to put it mildly, are not speaking for themselves alone, would be criminal folly. To suppress The Reasoner, or to take disciplinary action against its editors and contributors, would not be to suppress the crisis of which it is a reflection, but to exacerbate it greatly, and to do incalculable harm to the unity and reputation of our party. It is precisely because I believe this very strongly that I have written the present article.

What is required on the part of the leadership, I suggest, is a frank and open recognition of the fact (a) that the crisis in our party is rather more serious than has hitherto been acknowledged, and (b) that the space in the existing party press which can be allotted to controversy and discussion is not nearly sufficient to enable the problems involved to be properly solved. If these facts are admitted, I do not think that the question of The Reasoner will be very difficult to deal with. If the right of independent publication be admitted, then The Reasoner can continue to fulfil its present function so long as there is a demand for it, preferably with the addition to the editorial board of one or two comrades nominated by the Executive Committee. If the right of independent publication be not admitted, then alternative channels must be made available for the adequate public expression of the views reflected in The Reasoner. A substantial enlargement of World News might possibly meet the need, but a preferable arrangement would be for the Executive Committee itself to issue a special journal devoted to inner-party discussion, similar in aims and format to The Reasoner, with the latter's present editors included on the editorial board. Above all, let us realize that The Reasoner cannot possibly be dealt with in the way in which it would have been dealt with, say, five years ago. The principle of solidarity is a good and essential one. But solidarity which conceals widespread disagreements on basic points is surely worse than no solidarity at all.

Glasgow, 27.8.56.

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A LETTER TO THE EDITORSBy Doris Lassing

Comrades:

The fact that you felt impelled to publish an independent Communist journal seems to me of more significance even than the material you print - which I find valuable.

The basic conflict in the party now in Britain is between those comrades who immediately respond to statements such as - I quote from your first issue: "There is a fear of ideas on the part of some members - and even leading members - of our party, who for too long have been cushioned from the give-and-take of polemic", and "We believe that the self-imposed restrictions upon controversy . . . have led to gradual blurring of theoretical clarity and to the encouragement . . . of attitudes akin to intellectual cynicism" - and those comrades who react with angry and even puzzled surprise, as to an unjustified attack.

Recently I was at a meeting of a party group where a member of the party administration was present to hear criticisms by comrades of party policy since the 20th Congress. For some two hours we were sharply demanding, in various forms, new thinking, a fresh approach, a return to honest intellectual conflict. The comrade from King Street listened patiently, and replied in a series of defensive platitudes which reflected all the attitudes of mind we had been attacking. The point is that this comrade, an intelligent and devoted man, had not the faintest notion what we were talking about.

This has been going on in various ways in the party for some months: a battle between those of us who believe that deep issues of principle are raised by the "revelations"; and those who think of what has happened in the Soviet Union and other countries as "mistakes"; or who are shocked by them but think any open or sharp debate will split the party. This fear by the leadership of splitting the party has been responsible for their lack of leadership, for their dragging behind events; of admitting nothing until they were forced into it by pressure from the rank and file or by statements in the capitalist press.

Your journal has come into existence because of a feeling of deep frustration, which I understand only too well.

But, comrades, I feel there is a danger in the form of your protest - for it is, in fact, a protest.

One of the most interesting and frightening of the reactions to the "revelations" is the attitude of mind expressed by the phrase "you intellectuals." It is a phrase which inevitably emerges during the course of a conversation with any of the comrades in leading positions; and is only yet another of the defensive rationalisations against clear thought.

After the meeting I mentioned above, during which I attacked this concept of intellectuals being concerned with abstract ideas of liberty, as opposed to the honest workers who were only concerned with the basic and important bread-and-butter principles, the comrade from King Street insisted that any gulf between workers and intellectuals was dangerous, suggesting that I was trumping up an imaginary grievance. The moment the meeting was over, he turned to the person sitting next to him, and said: "We are having terrible trouble with our intellectuals."

We all know that the British working class movement has an instinctive anti-intellectual bias, which we need not go into here. We all know that intellectuals in our kind of society tend to be isolated from the ordinary

people. This is particularly true in Britain. Above all, the Stalin era was deeply anti-intellectual in the sense that it suppressed the emergence of ideas that were not of immediate service to the business of survival.

But I do not think the way to break down this barrier is to separate ourselves off, as intellectuals, from the conflicts inside the party now. I think it would be a pity if The Reasoner became a sort of sniping post from the tree of liberty at the body of the party.

I believe your motive for starting The Reasoner was the admirable and necessary one of trying to restore intellectual conflict, and real Marxist thinking into the party. But it could easily be interpreted as an attack against the party leadership as such.

At the moment, a lot of comrades are going around saying: "We've got to get rid of the old gang, get fresh men in; the old ones are discredited." But this is nothing more nor less than the familiar business of looking for scapegoats, which, on another level, has led to the whole sickening business of trials and frame-ups and murders in the Communist countries. Admittedly the phrase "you intellectuals" is pure scape-goatism; but there is no reason why we should do the same thing in reverse. Our job as intellectuals is to think.

It seems to me naive, and bad politics, and even dishonest to suggest that all we have to do is to kick out the old gang and put in a new one.

The fact is that the British party, together with the other Communist parties, is deeply marked by the attitudes of mind of the Stalin era; that all the party members, including ourselves, have been formed by them - whether in acceptance or in reaction; and this is bound to be so for some time. The sharp and angry demand for a new approach is just as much a part of the process as the defensiveness and the rigidity.

What we have to demand, I think, is not scape-goats, confessions and breast-beatings; but a re-examination of our basic thinking; and this should be done at a full Party Congress devoted not to pious platitudes and affirmations of support for Communism, which surely should be taken for granted by now; but to hard thinking. I am in absolute disagreement with the attitude that open conflict will split the party; on the contrary, I believe that it is only open conflict resulting in a policy reflecting the various trends in the party which will save it from disintegrating into ineffective little splinter groups. If the attitude of mind represented by The Reasoner (with which I am in full agreement) can make itself felt at such a Congress, then I think its publication will be justified. But you should do everything you can to prevent it from becoming something like "a revolt of the intellectuals."

There is only one remark in your first issue which I found disquieting - and indeed, comrades, dishonest.

You said: "I am not proud of the silence which I and others have kept too long over these and other matters."

The facts are that, up to the 20th Congress, if those of us who knew what was going on - and it was perfectly possible to know, if one kept one's mind open and read the plentiful evidence available - if we had said what we thought, in the only place open to us, the capitalist press, we would have been cast out by the party and branded as traitors, and inevitably isolated by bitterness and recrimination from a world movement in which we believed, and of which we wished to remain a part.

That is why we kept silence. We believed that Communism had a vitality and a moral vigour that would triumph over the brutality and intellectual dishonesty that had undermined it. We were right to think so. But we did keep silence, knowing exactly what we were doing; and for precisely

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the same reasons that made the leadership of the Communist parties of the West absolutely right about the great economic advances of Communism; and absolutely dishonest about the defeat of liberty and decency that was the price paid for these advances. What is the use of saying "We should have done this, - or that." The fact is, that we did keep quiet, and if the same situation arose, we would probably keep quiet again. What we have to do is to make it impossible for the same situation to arise.

But above all, we must accept our responsibility for having been part of the thing, our responsibility for the good and for the bad.

As long as groups, or individuals, hurl abuse at each other; trying to fasten the blame on each other, it shows we have not begun to accept the implications of what has happened.

We have all been part of the terrible, magnificent, bloody, contradictory process, the establishing of the first Communist regime in the world - which has made possible our present freedom to say what we think, and to think again creatively.

London, 29.7.56

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THE PLACE OF UNORTHODOXY
IN MARXISM

By Hyman Levy

MARXISM is the natural offspring of Capitalism. When the violence to human values which early Capitalism inflicted on its men, women, and child workers, was wedded to the science and technology of the Industrial Revolution, a rational analysis of society was ready for birth. Yet Marxism was an unorthodoxy. It still is. It seeks to extend scientific principles beyond the limited range of inanimate matter to social groups; it sets out deliberately to transform the capitalist society from which it sprung. It is new and creative because it is, and sees itself, as an expression of a necessary contradiction in Capitalism. The vital distinction between the Labour Party and the Communist Party lies in the tendency of the former to compromise with capitalist orthodoxy, and the insistence of the latter to retain its unorthodoxy. This difference in behaviour lies in the nature of the Marxist exposure of the contradictions of Capitalism.

The respective creative roles of orthodoxy and unorthodoxy stand out clearly in the field of science and technology. For example the destruction of the belief that the earth was the centre of the universe, and that man was specially created as the focal creature in that scheme, marked the end of an old orthodoxy. So also at a later date did the denial of the indivisibility of the atom, the repudiation of action at a distance and of the existence of the ether, the concept of space-time, and the theory of relativity. These unorthodoxies were creative activities that paved the way to a new level of orthodox science. They were primarily theoretical advances. Technology on the other hand is the detailed working out of orthodox science in social practice. It helps to change the physical environment in which people live and so helps to change their outlook. Unorthodoxy, when it is correct, jerks the mind of man forward suddenly; orthodoxy, when correctly applied, marks a steady indirect advance.

Marx and Engels deliberately absorbed everything possible in science, both in fact and in methodology, and used it as an instrument in the social

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struggle. They, like Lenin, were acutely aware of the possible creative role of unorthodox ideas. To-day therefore, a century later, when Marxist parties are consciously organised social institutions, we have to ask how far they also are aware of this, and pursuing it into practice, how far they have even set up machinery deliberately to encourage intelligent unorthodoxy to express itself in word and deed.

Within the Communist Party there does not at present exist a really adequate machinery of self-criticism. By this I do not mean the breast-beating and the rending of garments by miserable sinners; if it gives him satisfaction anyone can indulge in this in the privacy of his own apartment. I mean the public analysis of policy in the mood in which a matter would be discussed at a scientific gathering; the examination of where the party has been right and where wrong in the past; whether the falseness if any, has arisen simply from a wrong analysis of existing facts or from the emergence of new facts that could not have been known; the careful drawing of scientific lessons. This is a necessary step for effecting the readjustment of the minds of Marxists to meet the changing situation. Scientific education demands this at least. Party press is not adequate in space alone to meet this; nor is it broad enough, perhaps as a consequence, to allow for a wide latitude of divergence of views. I, like many others, claim the right to be wrong. It is not possible to find the right without blundering through the wrong.

There are difficulties here. There is for example an intense loyalty among members, an easy because loyal acceptance of policy, a tendency to be critical of those who are critical, and therefore a ready acceptance of the line as officially sponsored. There is a case for this; the history of the Soviet Union is scarred deeply by the wounds inflicted by irresponsible unorthodoxy during the revolutionary struggle. But to-day we have had exposed to us the infinitely deeper wounds inflicted on the body of a would-be Socialist society by an unrelenting and inflexible orthodoxy.

The consequences could have been foreseen, and should have been anticipated by professing Marxists. How can an unorthodox party leave no room for unorthodoxy within its own ranks, and expect to survive without doing violence to its best values, to its imagination, and therefore finally to its own integrity? To a scientific body integrity is its very life-blood. Truth demands integrity. That is why I am writing this article for The Reasoner; not because I necessarily agree with the content of its articles - that is irrelevant - but because at a critical moment when a public expression of faith in human decency was called for, it dared to take the unorthodox step of challenging an impossible silence.

It is important to examine the nature of the confusion that now exists in the minds of many members. Let us realise in the first place that no-one joins the Communist Party for social advancement. To the social climber the first step on the ladder is the rung of orthodoxy. We must assume therefore that members are honest genuine people, who have certain values in common. But values do not exist in a vacuum. They must be periodically asserted, justified and developed. Every change in circumstance demands their re-assertion and re-assessment. From them spring loyalties, and danger begins with the persistent rationalisation of loyalties that have become uncritical. The first historic experiment in Socialism called forth an intense upsurge of enthusiasm and an immense fund of loyalty. This had its place and was of great importance while the Soviet Union was struggling against internal and external enemies. Capitalist agencies throughout the world were watching hawk-eyed for any weak spot that might be exploited to decay and to destroy the great experiment. For every truth these enemies of Socialism may have uttered there were a thousand fabricated lies, and so the loyal supporters swept both truth and falsehood indiscriminately into the refuse can. That was natural, and I personally have no regrets. If I have been uncritical, it was the damage done to me by anti-Socialist propaganda. I lick these wounds and start again.

To-day the situation has been transformed. While British Capitalism in spite of its decay is still strong enough to permit the existence of a Communist Party in its midst, the Soviet Union is now so strong that its

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decisions tend to dominate the political world scene, and it can easily dispense with any aid that the British Communist Party may give it. This in no way reflects on the need for the international solidarity of the Socialist Movement. But a dialectical change has taken place on the world political stage, and this must be reflected in the thoughts and feelings of Communists if their minds are to keep pace with the physical world.

Let me illustrate the kind of difficulty I meet. Kruschev makes a public statement exposing a vast network of unsocialistic degeneracy that has existed in the Soviet Union for many years. If the economic exploitation of man by man has been swept away, apparently there still did exist that other form of human exploitation that under physical pressure extracted false confessions from individuals. Marxists have been adamant in denying that they hold any brief for the purely Economic Interpretation of History. Economism is no part of their outlook. Because the economic exploitation of man by man has been eliminated from the Soviet Union, this does not therefore in itself imply that Socialism has been achieved - and the Kruschev revelations underline this. They do more. They lead the way in public self-criticism. They now throw the door wide open to Socialists the world over to see for themselves what has been happening, and to draw the lessons. Anything less than this would not be worthy of scientific Marxists. The progress of an experiment has to be reported regularly and systematically so that the understanding of the scientific thinker may proceed step by step with the development of the experiment.

But here a curious contradiction begins to arise among many comrades. Their Socialist loyalty during the many years of Soviet construction under the most terrible of conditions has become a conditioned habit of thought, a suppression of judgement and a danger to their integrity. The demand that the Communist Party shall give leadership not only on political and economic matters but also on ethical and moral issues, seems to them to smack of heresy and treason, if it involves condemning the very things that Kruschev has himself exposed. In remaining loyal to everything without exception in the past they necessarily condemn the present exposures; but this also they do not do, again out of loyalty. Such a contradictory attitude has no meaning and no place surely among Marxists, and those who seek to retain it are in fact becoming mental and moral reactionaries. Their minds and feelings are becoming atrophied, and they are losing the capacity for critical and constructive judgement.

To condemn or blame them for this is itself a stupidity. The problem is not to blame - that is merely to approach the problem through individual sinfulness - but to remedy and to rectify. The violent upsurge of feeling within the party during the past few months is both a sign of vigour and evidence of a dangerous malady that had grown unawares in our midst. This malady is the creeping paralysis of orthodoxy, and must be deliberately and carefully handled. Because we are an unorthodox party composed of members who renounce social advantage, we tend to hold the respect of outsiders. We must beware lest we become the object of ridicule and contempt. All this is of first importance in relation to the immediate future.

This country is on the edge of tremendous changes. Countries like Britain and France with their industries rooted largely in the first Industrial Revolution are facing the oncome of a new Industrial Revolution with futile unavailing gestures intended to retain a hold on a rapidly crumbling colonial empire that belongs to a past epoch. A fundamental reconstruction of the whole industrial structure of the country is now called for. When we talk of a new level of production of scientific and technical men comparable with what is being done in the USSR to meet the needs of the new age we are talking of the release of enormous potential thought and activity from the working class, for from no other source can these men come. In such a situation the Communist Party has a great role to play if it can mobilise the creative energies of brains and youth and can use its Marxism in a constructive way.

How is it to win the youth? In the 1930's the Universities of the country were alive with young men and women eager and anxious to understand

The Place of Unorthodoxy in Marxism - Continued

the world in which they lived. Many of the best laid down their lives in Spain; others have slipped away into disillusionment or become stiff and doctrinaire in their attitude. The fire of unorthodoxy has burnt out, partly I think because the Communist Party has not known how to feed the flame. To-day a new generation has come into being consumed with new problems, . . . the ethics of the Atom Bomb, the constructive use of science and technology, the apparent contradiction between specialisation and cultural interests, etc etc. In the pre-war years when the dangers of fascism and war loomed on the horizon, the Left Book Club channelled the mental and moral energies of young men and women in the right direction, but to-day the issues that agitate them arise sporadically as individual problems, and the party has lost its punch and its attraction for them. If the Krushchev revelations have indeed jerked the CPSU out of the desperate path it was treading, once more onto the true path of Socialism, how far will a corresponding salutary effect have been produced on the British Communist Party? What is to be the consciously planned readjustment that will draw in the new blood so urgently needed to-day? Above all these young people need discussion, open and frank discussion with people whose bona fides they can trust. Those of us who move in academic circles know how anxious they are for clarity and guidance, and how easy it is for institutions that trade in mysticism to lead them captive and mentally bound up their blind alleys. I intend here to mention only one or two relatively simple steps, if only as a beginning.

The first is to admit openly and publicly that we do not have all the answers to all the questions. This is merely to state a fact that is apparent to everyone whose mind is not petrified. The disclosures about the USSR in themselves point to a hundred factors on which we have been wrong. Are we satisfied that the USSR is already a Socialist country now treading the path to Communism? Did we understand the practical working of Soviet Democracy? Can we examine the vicissitudes of Soviet art, its music, its literature, its theatre, its cinema, honestly and frankly? What are the lessons for Marxism to be drawn from what has occurred? What is meant by Socialist ethics in theory? In Soviet practice? In the world of Capitalism? These and a thousand other questions are on the lips of many people.

The second point is to attempt to implement in practice the principle I have tried to propound earlier that there is both a "line" to be followed and there is not a "line". I will not expand this further except to say that it implies an easier, more accommodating, less rigorous attitude to publication within the Party press. We expect to have the right to be wrong without the assumption that the Party necessarily endorses our wrongness. We expect a specific admission periodically that the Party may have been wrong, by putting its policy publicly and critically to the test, in its own press. A policy is correct if it predicts the outcome of action or if those who predict wrongly can lay their finger on the previously unknowable factors that have falsified the prediction. A scientific party must act like a scientific society.

The third point is concerned with the problem of mobilising the younger generation of intellectuals. The two previous points, it seems to me are necessary preliminaries to this, and without them the problem is insoluble; the party will remain defunct as far as they are concerned, and they will not listen to any rational analysis of the multitude of problems that confront them to-day. At every University and in most major towns there is required an open Forum at which party members and such of their friends as can be guaranteed by party members (in order only to exclude the cranks and the quarrelsome) can meet for unfettered discussion of political, social, and ethical issues without let or hindrance, and without previous briefing. By this I mean that although the party should sponsor the meetings, it should make no attempt to "steer" the lines of the discussion, to select topics, or to keep party members on the correct "line". The important thing is for those who are seeking a way out, to fight through to the solution, along with those who think they already know. The atmosphere is at present ripe for a Battle of Ideas. If the party believes in itself all it requires to do is to provide the battleground, sweeping aside its habitual tendency to work out the strategy and the tactics to the minutest detail. To those not already convinced a staged and directed

The Place of Unorthodoxy in Marxism - Concluded

discussion can easily defeat itself. This ought to be obvious to those who watch the dialectical process at work.

Such open forums would show not only that the party is fearless in its approach to the truth, but that it is the only party that is fearless. Let it then incorporate the best of the outcome of such discussions into its own outlook. Along some such lines - and only minor ones have been suggested here - unorthodoxy can be nourished and encouraged within the party itself. This, I believe, is one of the necessary conditions for the renewal of its life-blood.

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TO POSTERITY

By Bertolt Brecht

Indeed I live in the dark ages!
A guileless word is an absurdity. A smooth forehead betokens
A hard heart. He who laughs
Has not yet heard
The terrible tidings.

Ah, what an age it is
When to speak of trees is almost a crime
For it is a kind of silence about injustice!
And he who walks calmly across the street,
Is he not out of reach of his friends
In trouble?

It is true: I earn my living
But, believe me, it is only an accident.
Nothing that I do entitles me to eat my fill.
By chance I was spared. (If my luck leaves me I am lost.)

They tell me: eat and drink. Be glad you have it!
But how can I eat and drink
When my food is snatched from the hungry
And my glass of water belongs to the thirsty?
And yet I eat and drink.

I would gladly be wise.
The old books tell us what wisdom is:
Avoid the strife of the world, live out your little time
Fearing no one,
Using no violence,
Return good for evil -
Not fulfillment of desire but forgetfulness
Passes for wisdom.
I can do none of this:
Indeed I live in the dark ages!

I came to the cities in a time of disorder
When hunger ruled.
I came among men in a time of uprising
And I revolted with them.
So the time passed away
Which on earth was given me.

I ate my food between massacres.
 The shadow of murder lay upon my sleep.
 And when I loved, I loved with indifference.
 I looked upon my nature with impatience.
 So the time passed away
 Which on earth was given me.

In my time streets lead to the quicksand.
 Speech betrayed me to the slaughterer.
 There was little I could do. But without me
 The rulers would have been more secure. This was my hope.
 So the time passed away
 Which on earth was given me.

Men's strength was little. The goal
 Lay far in the distance,
 Easy to see if for me
 Scarcely attainable.
 So the time passed away
 Which on earth was given me.

You, who shall emerge from the flood
 In which we are sinking,
 Think -
 When you speak of our weaknesses,
 Also of the dark time
 That brought them forth.
 For we went, changing our country more often than our shoes,
 In the class war, despairing
 When there was only injustice and no resistance.

For we knew only too well:
 Even the hatred of squalor
 Makes the brow grow stern.
 Even anger against injustice
 Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas, we
 Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness
 Could not ourselves be kind.

But you, when at last it comes to pass
 That man can help his fellow man,
 Do not judge us
 Too harshly.

 (This poem, written in 1947, is translated
 by H.R.Hays, and reprinted here with acknow-
 ledgements to the National Guardian.)

"WORLD SOCIALISM RE-STATED" : A COMMENT

By John Saville

G.D.H.Cole, World Socialism Re-Statd ("New Statesman" pamphlet, 1/6d)

THE STAND that Cole has made for labour unity, in his articles in the New Statesman of 5 May and in the Daily Worker of 14 May, has been much welcomed in our press and in our propaganda. The present pamphlet is a more thorough working out of his position and is, I believe, his most important pronouncement for years. Since he lays so much emphasis upon the importance of the unity of the labour movements throughout the world, this present statement will be widely commented upon, and quoted by all of us.

World Socialism: A Comment - Continued

It will be widely quoted. Yes, indeed. I can see already the letters in World News and I can hear our speakers - "As Professor Cole so rightly says in his 'World Socialism Re-stated', p. 46: 'Socialism cannot be reinvigorated unless the working class movement in each country can be reunited solidly in its support'." And yet if we stop at this point, and lean too heavily upon Cole's general support for labour unity, we shall not only be falsifying Cole's position but we shall be deceiving ourselves.

Our party is rightly much heartened by this support for unity from such a respected member of the British labour movement, and we are certainly not wrong in our emphasis of its importance. But we have to consider all that Cole has said in this context. For Cole, after acknowledging that Socialism in Italy and France cannot be achieved without the Communist Parties in these countries, goes on to say this about us in Britain:

"In Great Britain, where the Communist Party is negligible as a political force, there is no case for an United Front - the more so because the Party is peculiarly sectarian and doctrinaire. But there is a case for recognising the plain fact that the Communists are a quite considerable force in a number of trade unions and will continue to be a disruptive and trouble-making force as long as the attempt is made to ostracise them. I am not unaware of the mischief that a small, highly disciplined, unscrupulous minority out to make trouble can do to an organisation consisting quite largely of rather apathetic adherents. Nevertheless, I am against the adoption of rules excluding Communists from trade union office, and still more against the tendency of some trade union leaders to brand every left wing trade unionist as a Communist or 'fellow traveller'. I believe that the way to build a strong, democratic movement is to decentralise power and responsibility and to combat Communism, not by exclusions, but by increasing the numbers who can take an active part in trade union affairs and by carrying out a really big campaign of trade union education in economic and political matters." (p.14)

There are many things in this quotation to be argued about. I take strong exception to the statement that our industrial comrades are "a disruptive and trouble-making force"; and I believe this to be a distortion of the situation in British trade unionism. I am sure that Cole would not deny the importance of the trade union struggle and the day-to-day fight on the factory floor; and who more than the Communists engage in these battles? And on another level, it is our Communist trade unionists who have consistently raised colonial questions at the T.U.C., - issues about which Cole writes so passionately in this present pamphlet. I cannot in any way accept these comments upon a group of men without whose personal sacrifice, guts and political courage the working-class movement in this country would be immeasurably weaker.

I am not however concerned in this comment with any detailed discussion of what, to me, are weaknesses in Cole's argument. What does concern me here are those points of criticism which strike home. It is all too easy for Communists to write off hostile comment with a catch phrase, and to accept a rounded and tight analysis that refutes all error to our own satisfaction. We roll "self-criticism" off our tongues at the least provocation. But self-criticism demands not just a general recognition of error but particular analysis and detailed discussion. When one of our leading comrades writes that "we are acknowledging our mistakes" openly and trying to repair them", I want to know where we have done this except in the most general terms.

Is it true, for example, that the British Communist Party is "peculiarly sectarian and doctrinaire"? In two limited respects I would argue that it is not true. I certainly do not find the British more doctrinaire than the French party or more sectarian than the Australian. And I believe that as a party we have greatly matured in political experience and Marxist understanding over the past twenty years. In what then does our sectarianism consist, and how far is Cole justified in commenting upon our attitudes in these contemptuous terms?

I will confine myself to one important aspect of sectarianism - and one of which Cole, as an historian, will be very much aware. This is our attitude to our own history, our refusal to analyse fully, frankly, and honestly past mistakes and failures, alongside past achievements. And not our history alone. We must look afresh at the whole history of the Labour movement. It is not simply a matter of estimating the degree of error in our own past policies, if we believe mistakes have been made, but of analysing these mistakes in the whole context of the political situation in which they occurred. If we were wrong, or partially wrong, then others - groups, parties, individuals - may have been right. Simply to acknowledge our mistakes without recognising that a more correct policy may have been advocated or practised by others is to overcome a sectarian attitude only in part.

Take, for example, the crucial matter of Communist-Labour relations. We are working to-day to remove bans and proscriptions in order that Communists shall take their place in the organisations of the Labour movement. That is our short term aim. Our long term perspective is a united labour movement whose exact form it is impossible yet to foresee.

But these bans are rooted in history. We know the role of those who profited by our mistakes, who sought to drive us into isolation and to perpetuate the division in our labour movement. But what of our own part? When Cole, for instance, writes that after 1918 the "Comintern . . . deliberately split the working class movement in every country", this is a statement that cannot be answered by platform rhetoric but must be examined in all its complexity. Again, we must examine the whole period of "social-fascism". Were we correct in applying the "New Line" in this country after 1928, in which Social-Democracy was characterised "as the mainstay of imperialism in the working class"? I have not forgotten that the political background included a Labour Party leadership, a section of which sold out to the class enemy in 1931. But this is not the whole story; and it is from this time especially that there developed much of the bitterness that still finds political expression in the movement at large. We may have been right in our general line but sectarian in its application. But the examination must be made.

Or consider what is a more vivid memory to us all - the change of line to the war of 1939. There is not a shred of doubt that this question is still exercising a considerable political effect. Many of our own members are now convinced that we were wrong to switch to the policy of the imperialist war, many more are confused, and most are no doubt hoping that we can get by without the painful business of analysis.

Comrades will ask: why should we get involved in this detailed criticism of ourselves, which may give joy to our enemies and embarrass our friends? Why dig up issues long laid to rest? Will not the impression be created that the whole of our past is to be thrown out of the window? Have not other sections of the Labour movement made more serious and prolonged mistakes of policy, whose effect was to weaken working class opposition to Facism and imperialism, and to contribute to the drift to war? Is not Social-Democracy a trend in the Labour movement which, because it is based on the theory of class collaboration, has disarmed the workers and delivered them up to the Butskells? And are not our mistakes paltry beside these, and ones for which we need make no apology?

These arguments are commonly used. They stem, I believe, from a refusal to appreciate the deeper implications of our sectarianism. Whatever mistakes others have made, and whatever wrong tendencies they reveal, there is no substitute for honest enquiry into our own shortcomings. To claim to be the vanguard, to emphasise on all occasions the need for Marxist theory to become the guiding principle of our whole movement, and yet to exhibit an attitude of smugness and complacency towards our political activity, past and present, is a contradiction that will have disastrous effect upon our practice.

World Socialism: a Comment - Concluded

The political health of our party depends upon the maintenance of a critical, questioning attitude towards ourselves. I can sum it up most easily in the words of Palme Dutt, written in 1929 on the occasion of another major crisis in our history:

". . . the mistakes of the past two years have already cost us too much. The easy-going attitude which is satisfied to 'recognise' mistakes and pass on, without deeper analysis or drawing lessons for the future, and with the inevitable consequence of repeating these mistakes in new forms, must end . . . It is no longer sufficient merely to 'recognise' a mistake after it has been pointed out, and pass on. It is necessary to draw out by the roots the tendency revealed by the mistake and brand it."

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I have concentrated upon this matter of self-criticism and our party history because, as I read it, this pamphlet by Cole is above all else a call to all sections of the world labour movement to look again at themselves and to ask in the most serious and responsible way whether much more cannot be done on all sides to end the tragic divisions which have cost us so much these past forty years. But there are many other matters of importance that must be considered in a more detailed discussion. I believe, for example, that Cole underestimates the part that imperialism plays in the British economy, and that on another matter he does not underline with sufficient emphasis the strength of the reactionary elements in Britain and their ability to manipulate the media of communication and not least the State machine. I am to-day, however, a good deal less dogmatic in denying his analysis than I might have been half a dozen years ago. One of the worst features of the past decade is that Marxism has ceased to be the exciting intellectual body of ideas that it was in the 1930s. In the field of economics, for example, we have not yet succeeded in developing our ideas to meet the changing structure of post-war society, and when Cole writes as he does of imperialism, I can only reply, despite the important work of R.P.Dutt, that we have as yet little to offer in criticism except generalities.

By focussing on our own problems in this way, I have done less than justice to this pamphlet by Cole. His unequivocal attitude to the colonial question, his refusal to be associated in any way with the world crusade against Communism, his recognition of the deficiencies in the theories of Social-Democracy, his insistence upon the importance of equality in a Socialist society - these represent encouragement and hope to all Socialists of whatever persuasion. There are important arguments to which Communists cannot assent, but used imaginatively this statement could become an important landmark in the history of our movement.

We must not for one moment underestimate the extent to which this present situation allows us to establish fraternal relations between all sections of the world movement, and the real possibilities that exist to end the divisions between us from which only our enemies have benefitted. Unity is not an historical process that will take place easily. It is the gritty, difficult business of comradely discussion and practical action in the course of which many setbacks will be experienced. What must keep us going along this road is our common belief in the Socialist Commonwealth. G.D.H.Cole has provided us with a start.

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"Though a lie may serve for the moment, it is inevitably injurious in the long run; the truth, on the other hand, inevitably serves in the end even if it may hurt for the moment." DIDEROT

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"Long legs to the baby" writes a Lanarkshire reader, and the mass of letters echo this welcome: "a welcome life-line to hang onto" (Tunbridge Wells), "expressed the feelings of many comrades" (Bromley), "our integrity has been saved" (Hertfordshire), "feelings of mounting elation & tremendous relief" (West Yorks). "My first reaction was one of great joy & wild excitement, so accustomed had I become to the severe limits imposed on self-expression by the dogmatic, sectarian & authoritarian tradition of our own press" (London). A Cambridge reader goes overboard (we think): "the first number . . . will prove to be an historic document in the annals of international socialism." We prefer an assessment from S.E. London: "The most hopeful thing to come out of the discussion - which so far hasn't really been a discussion but grumble, complaint & assertion with no sense of direction or even of common language."

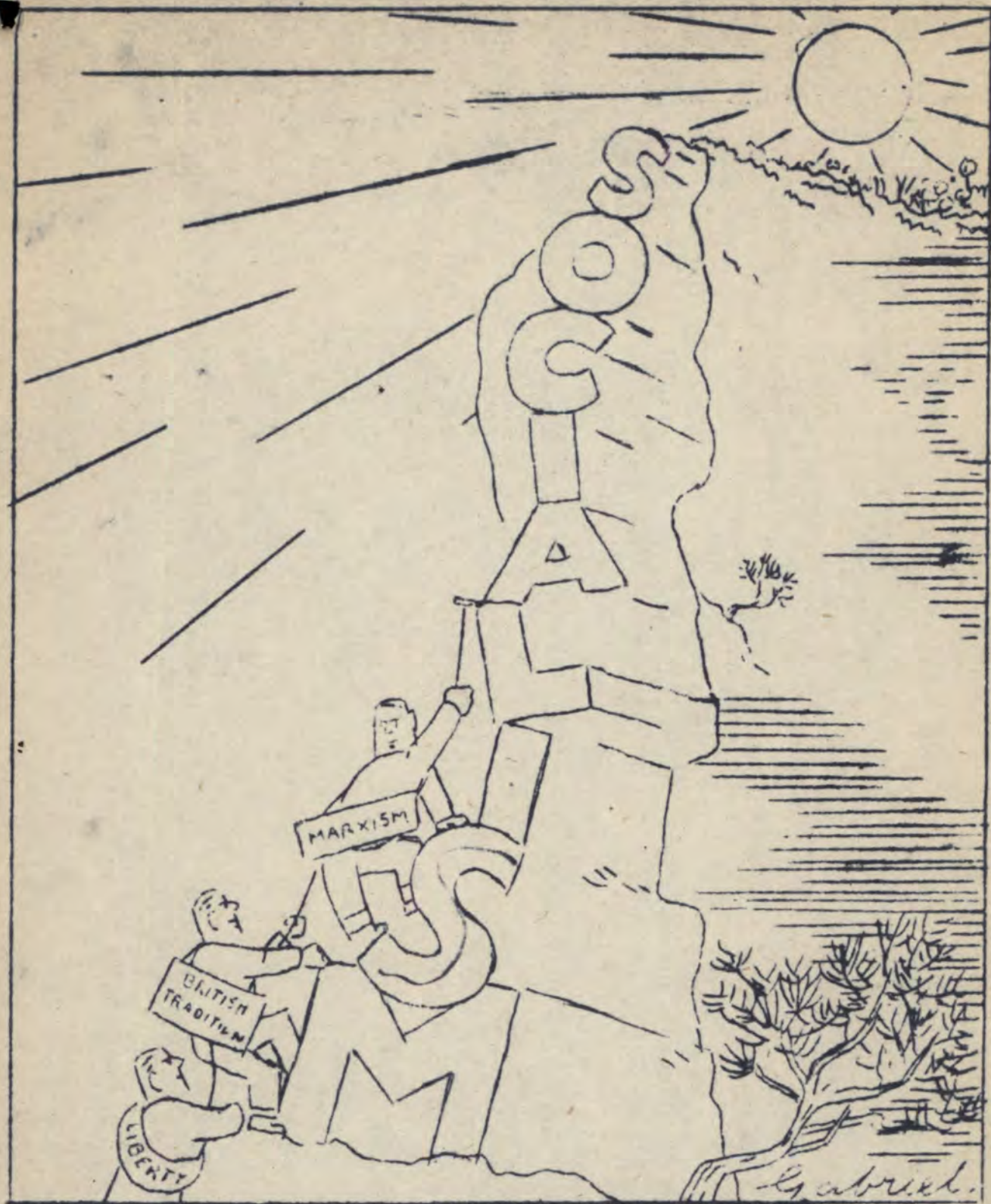
We find no difference between the welcome of industrial and professional comrades. From Nottingham: "I took it to work & showed it to a couple of comrades . . . it has become so battered & soiled that I hardly dare take it back to the owner! . . . Nothing particularly 'intellectual' about any of us - we are just ordinary crazy mixed-up Party members clutching at straws - so I foresee a great future for The Reasoner." Old stagers & young hands join the welcome. "I am concerned with adjusting the numerous defects of the C.P. of which I have been a member for 32 years," writes a Londoner - adding "If I am really convinced this to be impossible, then I shall chuck politics." Another reader who joined the Party last year writes that The Reasoner has given new hope and helped him to reverse a decision to leave. "The first bright spot I have found in this country . . . almost since I joined the party in 1932," writes another Londoner, with wilful exaggeration: "So good to get some genuine material from other countries, other than the sickening usual blurb about the magnificent achievements, the superb leadership, the comfort & happiness of the masses, etc."

There are many general comments of interest. "Some members who managed to swallow Kruschew's speech are finding great difficulty with Nina's Hats" (London). "Those of us who most prided ourselves on our independence & criticism are horrified to find the extent of the tyranny & abuse of power which we have in a sense supported; we are ashamed & angry with ourselves for having been deceived" (Birmingham). A Londoner writes (and we regret it) that he and his wife have recently resigned a long membership of the C.P.: "a reading of your magazine . . . has taken the edge off our bitterness." "I am glad that you make it clear that you are not encouraging factionalism. If factions arise as the result of such honest & fundamental discussion then the Party itself will be responsible for it."

Other readers are critical. "Valuable . . . but shrill & negative also." (Manchester). The article on democratic centralism "touches on all the points that are worrying many of us but does so without attempting to lay even the foundations for a discussion on what shall take its place." But a Somerset reader finds the article "brilliant", and one from Hertfordshire writes: "Is the organisational system which Lenin advocated for a military task in illegal conditions necessarily the best for Britain in 1956? And did 'democratic centralism' in Lenin's day include open discussion of fundamental policy in the party, or didn't it? These . . . questions need to be raised first, before they can be answered; good luck to The Reasoner for starting the ball rolling."

Some readers are worried about our independent publication. From Edinburgh comes a long letter concluding: "The Reasoner has done this much good; it has raised very urgently the question of the need for fundamental re-thinking & controversy. But it remains for recognised party machinery to be used to the full, as it can & should be, so that the job can be really carried out." "Could not such valuable fundamental polemical discussions be conducted within party journals & organs?" (Glamorgan). But a Londoner thinks "it should serve perhaps to give a bit of a kick to some other of our publications," and another that it is capable "of acting as a powerful lever" to make more open the official press. A few letters reveal more definite opposition. "The person who first showed it to me, unfortunately refused to let me borrow it on the grounds that 'it would be bad for me'!" A reader from King Street, London, "considered that, whatever your intentions, this was a harmful step." "Most interesting . . . though I hope it will not be necessary to make it a permanent publication" (Bradford).

Most readers would like to see the question of official/unofficial publication cleared up in a comradely way. So would we. But all are determined



TOGETHER.

READER'S ROUND-UP - Concluded

that discussion must not be put "in the old straight-jacket again" (Somerset).

For the future? Several readers send suggestions. "Communist morality . . . has got to be restated & made worthy of respect." (Worcestershire). "I think there should be an article exposing the way in which consistently over a long period, writers & artists have been alienated by bureaucracy & foolishness" (Essex). "I hope it will grow into the controversial cultural journal which we all so desperately desire" (another Essex reader). Whatever the long-term perspective, we like the summing-up of a Londoner: "May it bear fruits in the form of getting more people to think, clarify their ideas, stop talking jargon and cease to be 100%ers, and to formulate scientific and correct theories of Socialism in all the spheres of human knowledge." A big order. But we hope that we have made a small start.

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Correspondence

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

It is too early to say whether a Communist can welcome the publication of The Reasoner, because it is not clear in which way it will develop. Personally I am in favour of free and open discussion of all the fundamental issues that have been thrown in our faces by the 20th Congress and its repercussions, and if this cannot be contained in our standard Party publications, then by all means let us have another one, official or unofficial.

However, I cannot say I am very impressed by the first issue of The Reasoner, since there is a sniping snarling tone about it that I for one don't want to see inside our Party. Of course many of us are still on the rebound from the 20th Congress, and it is natural if not very Marxist for unbalanced viewpoints to develop. Certainly I hope the editors will rapidly drop their avowed policy of giving priority to "criticism of views which have come to be accepted as orthodox", and use their new journal instead for an extended examination of our profound problems, contributions being accepted on their merits. In this process, "orthodoxy" and "the leadership" (and of course ourselves) will indubitably receive thoroughly well earned criticism, and if it comes to pass that a few well known heads roll, and some new blood appears on the Executive Committee, who can say that won't be beneficial? But this is a different approach from setting up as a primary aim the lashing of the Party leadership and the rejection of "orthodox" ideas - an approach I find peevish, negative and quite undesirable.

I want to take issue with the contribution of K. Alexander on Democratic Centralism. It is a contribution sloppy in argument and a little sly in approach it seems to me; certainly nothing in it will cause the orthodox to shake in their boots, though it nevertheless represents a certain trend of thought current at the moment.

To begin with Alexander nowhere defines what he means by democratic centralism; nor does he outline the sort of organisational principles that should replace those holding the field now; nor even does he examine the kind of problems we face in trying to achieve socialism in this country, in order to find out what sort of organisation is necessary in a socialist Party for the job in hand. While he should be addressing himself to these problems Alexander takes us instead on a world quotation tour. After this we are introduced to the inner meanings of the phrase (not the thing itself) "democratic centralism". We should note, says Alexander, that the word "democratic" is only the adjective qualifying the noun "centralism". This emphasises "that the structure must be centralised, with some democratic features compatible with centralism." It does nothing of the kind of course, but how silly can we get? Would Alexander be any happier if the phrase we used was "centralist democracy" - if that phrase has any meaning? It is to be doubted, for in this case don't you see, "democracy" is only the noun, and the essential thing is that this noun is qualified by the word "centralist", which emphasises that the democracy can never be real or true democracy.

By centralism in a political party I mean (1) that minorities shall accept the decisions of majorities, and (2) that lower party organs shall accept the decisions of higher party organs. These definitions are of course taken from the printed rules in the Communist Party membership cards - Rules 12c and 12d respectively.

If these two principles of organisation are not accepted, then either the majority accepts the decisions of the minority (and surely Alexander would be against that), or else no one necessarily accepts the decisions of anyone. Similarly, if we don't accept the second principle then either higher Party organisations shall accept the decisions of lower ones, or else all Party organisations are free to do as they like. If the second alternative in each of these instances is adhered to in practice, then the Communist Party would be turned into a debating society.

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STATEMENT

This number of The Reasoner was already printed when we received the resolution of the E.C. of the Communist Party (Sept 9) calling on us to cease publication.

We wish to make it clear that we have at all times been willing to find a solution to the problem of our unofficial publication, provided that this gave effective guarantees that means will be found whereby minority views in the Communist Party can be fully posed, developed and sustained; and whereby full and frank discussion, of the type to be found in this number of the Reasoner, can continue. In our view the present facilities in the official press are quite inadequate to meet this crisis in Communist theory; and the editorial control is not such as to give confidence that minority rights can be safeguarded.

Up to this time the leadership of the Party has refused to enter into any discussion with us on the various proposals which we have made, nor have they offered any compromise on their behalf. We are confident that if the leadership will suggest means by which full and frank discussion can continue, and minority rights be safeguarded, a solution can be found which will end the present danger of dissension. We, on our behalf, are - and always have been - willing to give way to an official discussion journal (with certain obvious safeguards), and would be glad to discuss turning the Reasoner outwards, to fight the intellectual battles for Socialism among the people in the manner of the old Left Review, with a broader and more representative editorial board.

After studying the statement of the E.C. which is to appear in World News we will be willing to submit further information, and answers to specific questions, to any branch or committee of the Communist Party.

Finally, we wish to make clear two points. 1) None of the contributors to this number are in any way committed to the above statement. 2) We state categorically that we were not responsible - directly or indirectly - for releasing information disclosed in a Tribune report of last week. E.P.T. & J.S. 11 Sept.

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RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961

TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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