

Achievements as Well as Mistakes

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

The discussion that has been going on in the press during the past weeks is, in the main, sound and healthy. Especially the strong note of criticism and self-criticism in it is all to the good. But it also contains a negative element which is not so good. This is the tendency to leave out, as though they do not exist or are of no importance, the basic achievements, both here and abroad.

Some seem to proceed upon the theory that the more "mistakes" we can confess the better we will stand with the masses. The fact that many of the "errors" they admit may never have happened does not seem to cramp their style.

There has even been the wrong position taken that to refer to Communist achievements tends to blur over or to rationalize the mistakes. Such tendencies are incorrect and if not rectified can do serious damage to the Communist Party and to the cause of So-

cialism. The basic reaction of the masses to such excessive self-criticism, amounting to self-flagellation, is not to admire the Party for freely admitting errors, but to say, "What do we want with a Party which can only make mistakes?" Both the accomplishments of the Party and its errors must be presented, or else a fundamentally false picture is presented to the masses.

Take, for example, the question of the Stalin cult of the individual. It is perfectly normal and natural that Party members and other workers should pour out their dismay and indignation over the revelations contained in Khrushchev's speech. We should do nothing to hinder this, but instead should encourage it. But at the same time we must direct their resentment into constructive channels, by showing how such an unfortunate thing could happen and what is necessary to prevent it from occurring again.

ONE OF THE MAIN things that we must do in this general respect is, never to let it be forgotten the decisive advances to world Socialism that have been made by the USSR, People's China,

and the People's Democracies. We must also not overlook the fact these were precisely the forces, which, only a few years ago, during World War II, by defeating Hitler fascism, saved the world from worse slavery than it has ever known.

The discussion of the Stalin cult of the individual which does not take into consideration the positive side those enormous Socialist victories as well as the negative side—Stalin's brutal excesses—is of limited value, if not actually harmful, especially when written by Communists.

THE SAME WORD of caution is equally relevant with regard to the work of the Communist Party, USA, during the cold war period, a discussion which is also now going on. In reading the published letters and articles so far, one would get the impression that about all the Party has been doing during this period has been making one mistake after the other.

One would never gather the fact that during these years the Party honorably and correctly stood in the very front line of fighters against the looming danger of fas-

cism and war; that it was in part responsible for the great peace victory of the people in preventing the world from being devastated with an atomic war. Nor that in doing this that the Party was subjected to the sharpest persecution from the government.

Let us, therefore, for a change, have something about the many bitter court fights made by the Party, and also about our courageous leaders, Dennis, Flynn, Davis, Gates, Thompson, Gannett, and many others, who did long prison terms in defending the most basic rights and interests of the people.

Of course the Party made mistakes during this period, many of them serious left sectarian errors. But what worker's organization hasn't made serious errors in this period? I am willing to compare favorably the record of the Communist Party with that of other organization. By all means, we must admit and explain our errors. Lenin long ago made that the test of a real Communist Party. But let us not tackle this necessary job, as though we exult in our own errors and the more of them the better. We must remember

that a Communist Party, like every other worker organization, grows on its successes, and these, as well as its mistakes, must be made known to the masses.

The bourgeoisie in this country and elsewhere is joyous over the tragic exposures made necessary in connection with the Stalin affair, and the reactionary forces all over the world are trying to picture the international Communist movement as a mass of errors, brutalities, and political stupidities. They are even foolishly hoping that the movement is collapsing into decay and disintegration. Therefore, we must not fall into the trap of taking a negative attitude toward our own movement.

In our writings we must not forget the elementary fact that the great international Communist movement, in the face of a thousand difficulties, of which the Stalin cult is but the latest, is successfully leading humanity to the new and higher order of Socialism.

And let us also remember that the CPUSA is a worthy part of this great constructive world movement.