

New Times, New Measures

'The world changes and in these days it changes rapidly. A policy that was good six months ago is not necessarily now of any validity. It is necessary that we find better, more effective ways of keeping ourselves in tune with the world's needs.'

President EISENHOWER, April 21, 1956.

FROM Fulton to Aachen is geographically many leagues. In the span of time it is ten years. In the measure of world politics it is the journey from the abyss of darkness to the first rays of sunrise. Ten years have passed since Sir Winston Churchill, in the words of the *Daily Telegraph* (10.5.56) 'in his courageous Fulton speech of 1946 declared the Cold War open'. Already within seven years, by 1953, in face of the visible bankruptcy of the Western dreams of military and nuclear superiority to impose dictated solutions, and in face of the impregnable peaceful strength and staggering constructive advance of the socialist world, the author of Fulton led the way among Western political leaders in publicly advocating a new perspective for top-level negotiations for peaceful co-existence. But this year at Aachen the premier veteran statesman of the Western world went further.

Portent of Aachen

On May 10, 1956, Sir Winston Churchill at Aachen, in the presence of Premier Adenauer (to whom his speech gave, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, 'his biggest headache since his visit to Moscow in September'), launched a direct offensive against the basic cold war conception of the division of Europe into opposing military camps. With one blow he shattered the whole mythology of presenting the truncated torso of a bloc of Western European states as 'United Europe'. 'In a true unity of Europe', he declared, 'Russia must have her part'. With regard to all the forms of so-called 'European unity' expressed in Nato, Western European Union, O.E.E.C., the 'Council of Europe', etc., he declared that 'the spirit of this arrangement should not exclude Russia and the Eastern European States'. 'The great issues which perplex us', he went on, 'of which one of the gravest is the reunification of Germany, could then be solved more easily than by rival blocs confronting each other with suspicion and hostility'.

The Wheel Turns

Two years ago the Soviet Union offered to join Nato, in order to bring to the test of practice whether it was really a defensive alliance, as alleged, or in its essential character an anti-Soviet military coalition, and met with a refusal. Last year at the Foreign Minister's Conference at Geneva the Soviet Union proposed a united European Collective Security Pact, which should draw together and eventually replace both Nato and the Warsaw Pact, and thus end the dangerous confrontation of opposing military blocs. This proposal was rejected by the Western Foreign Ministers. The Soviet Union equally proposed that the unification of a peaceful Germany could best be achieved within such a framework of European Collective Security (as, indeed, the original Directive from the Heads of States Conference had plainly implied, by placing the question of German unification several paragraphs down in the agenda after the question of European security). This was no less absolutely refused by the Western Foreign Ministers, who insisted on their 'take it or leave it' terms of German unification in a partitioned Europe as the first condition for any settlement and as their non-negotiable ultimatum on the basis of which they broke up the Conference. Now the broad conception underlying the Soviet proposals has been presented in general outline with dramatic emphasis by Sir Winston Churchill as the path to a peaceful solution. No wonder the *Daily Telegraph* warns against the 'overriding

danger' of regarding the Churchillian policy as 'practicable in the present'. But even the gutter press has not so far dared to present Sir Winston as the Gramophone of Moscow. When the Cold War-maker of Fulton has become the Grand Peacemaker of Aachen, this is a measure of the transformation that is taking place in the world.

Churchillian Barometer

For the Churchillian initiative does not stand alone. The elder statesman may still be, as often before on some of the wider strategic-political issues of world relations, a little ahead of the main body of the politicians and generals of the capitalist world, the Montgomerys, Ismays or Macmillans today, or the Neville Chamberlains and Hoares of yesterday. This wider strategic conception in viewing the world outlook from the standpoint of his class has on occasions led him in an extreme reactionary direction. As the main protagonist of the wars of intervention, he was profoundly conscious of the new world era which was opening with the first victory of the working class and socialism, and desired to strangle it at birth. Similarly his recognition of the far-reaching world significance of Indian freedom led to his desperate rear-guard diehard fight against it. As the author of Fulton, he was no less conscious of the new balance of world relations with the extension of socialism to a world system, and once again hoped to use superior military nuclear power to turn the tide of history. But the same wider conception has also on occasions led him to stand in the forefront for conclusions of progressive significance. Before the second world war he was the first of the capitalist politicians to recognise the danger of the policy of promoting Hitler's rearmament and expansion as the supposed grand weapon against communism, and during the war he took the lead in embracing the alliance with the Soviet Union which saved the world—even though not without ulterior very different calculations for the future. So today since 1953 he has taken the lead among capitalist politicians in recognising the new balance of the world situation, the bankruptcy of the cold war policies, and the necessity to advance to meet the Soviet Union halfway in order to realise a positive policy for peaceful co-existence.

British-Soviet Talks

But in varying degree the same new tendencies have made themselves felt in all the countries of the Western alliance. The

British Conservative Government has welcomed Bulganin and Khrushchov for the most important talks since the Geneva summit meeting to carry forward the meeting of Heads of States on both sides. The frank and friendly interchange, and the constructive communiqué, have demonstrated the positive significance of these talks as a step forward on the path of peaceful co-existence. This positive significance has only been underlined by the failure of the reactionary diehard campaign to cancel or sabotage the talks. It is regrettable that the true feelings of the labour movement were misrepresented by the dinner episode, which succeeded in creating the impression that, at a moment when the Tory Government was striving to improve friendly relations with the Soviet Union, Labour appeared to be ranged with the most hostile anti-Soviet cold war forces. Had the full strength of the labour movement been mobilised for constructive aims, there is no doubt that more positive results could have been won from the talks. As it is, on the key issues of disarmament, the trade bans and European collective security the battle has still to be fought and won. Nevertheless, the outcome of the talks, the concrete trade offer, and the character of Sir Anthony Eden's subsequent broadcast and agreement to make a return visit to Moscow represent a serious step forward along the road.

Ferment in the West

Nor does Britain stand alone in thus taking the first tentative steps towards a new response to a new world situation. France's Premier Mollet has left for Moscow, following the visit of the French Socialist delegation and its talks with the representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (in practical contradiction of the Socialist International Bureau declaration attempting to veto such talks). France proposed through the Pineau plan to transform the emphasis of Nato to the economic plane, supported the Soviet proposal for a ban on arms exports to the Middle East, and has welcomed Tito to Paris. In Western Germany, even at the same time as the re-armament plans have now openly drawn in Hitler's principal generals such as Halder and the convicted war criminal Manstein to guide them, the flood of public expression rises against the bankruptcy of the Adenauer policy of relying on the power of Nato to force unification on the Western terms, and the demand gathers for direct negotiations with the Soviet Union as the path to peaceful reunification. Even in the United States, the confusion and controversy on future policy in

the midst of the partial paralysis of a presidential election year is accompanied by signs of new trends. In relation to the discussions on the future of Nato at its Council meeting the *Observer* reported on May 13 :

. . . the product of a pre-conference working group in which America played a leading role—the idea of a general European security group which might embrace both Nato and the Warsaw Pact. To put it bluntly, the American view is that Nato has grown stale.

Disarmament Deadlock and Disarmament Practice

This new climate in Western opinion and discussion has not yet found reflection in the necessary positive advance to new policies, corresponding to the far-reaching advance carried out by the Soviet Union and the socialist world. The Western powers still cling to the entire structure of the old cold war policies, even at the same time as their increasingly visible bankruptcy in the new conditions is recognised. This was shown in the breakdown of the Disarmament Sub-Committee negotiations, where the Western representatives aroused the biting sarcastic comment of their own supporters by successively obstructing every one of their own proposals as soon as the Soviet Union accepted them, and finally sought to introduce unlimited new conditions by demanding settlement of every political question all over the world before disarmament. But here, too, these tactics have proved a boomerang. To the mortification of the Western representatives, the Soviet Union has proceeded to cut the knot of the deadlock, so far as it can be cut from its side, by entering on large-scale unilateral disarmament, with the slashing of its armed forces by 65 divisions and 1,200,000 men, on top of the previous reduction of 640,000, or a net reduction of 1,840,000. A crash of shares on Wall Street followed this alarming news. The armaments tycoons very well understood that this practical example will overwhelmingly reinforce the popular campaign in the Western countries to compel a corresponding large-scale reduction of armed forces and a disarmament agreement.

What to do with the Dinosaur?

Similarly the Nato Council meeting in May revealed the same crisis of Western policy. 'Confusion', 'frustration', 'fundamental differences', 'deep divergences'—such are the terms the most responsible press reporters have used to describe the meeting. On the one hand, it was recognised that the ancient imaginary bogey

of an impending Soviet military onslaught could no longer be maintained or effective to induce the peoples to put up with the burdens of rearmament whose costs had totalled some 300 billion dollars or £107,000,000,000. On the other hand, as soon as it was proposed to endeavour to put a more reasonable face on the monster, and to present its purpose as mainly economic, insuperable difficulties were discovered. For not only did such economic projects cut across and duplicate the proliferation of West European and Atlantic economic organs already established. Still more decisive, it was obvious that the assumed main source of funds would need to be from the United States; and the United States had made abundantly clear, first, that it would never allow its foreign 'aid' funds to pass from its own control into the hands of any international body; and second, that the purposes of its foreign 'aid' were, and would remain, overwhelmingly military and strategic. Of the current vast figures of foreign 'aid' appropriations at this moment being demanded by President Eisenhower from Congress (figures often quoted by innocent, or perhaps sometimes less innocent, commentators as 'proof' of how far more abundant is American 'aid' than the socialist economic aid to under-developed countries), 83 per cent. is officially declared to be military aid, while the remaining less than one sixth of so-called 'economic' aid (mainly to bolster up Rhee, Chiang, Diem and other dictators) is expressly declared to be subservient to the strategic aims of U.S. foreign policy.

From Words to Deeds

Hence the monster remains in fact as before. After all the discussions about face-lifting for dinosaurs, the only reality of Nato remains the gigantic military machine of costly installations, bases, pipelines and airfields sprawling across half the world, occupation divisions and planned Nazi rearmament, all under American command, with the openly proclaimed aim of nuclear warfare even in 'minor' wars. All this, no less than the breakdown of the disarmament talks, shows how serious the fight for peace still is. But there is no doubt that the entire climate of discussion has changed. The formerly so aggressive apostles of the cold war and arms race are now on the defensive and apologetic. More and more, all serious and responsible opinion is seeking for an alternative course. It might be said that the battle for the principle of peaceful co-existence has already been won, even though the consequent essential practical changes in policy (disarmament, banning of

nuclear weapons, ending of colonial wars, removal of strategic trade bans, recognition of China in the United Nations, replacement of sectional military alliances by European and Asian collective security, etc.) are still resisted in practice and have still to be achieved. But the road towards these aims has opened out more favourably than at any previous moment. The new world situation has brought within the view of all the practical possibility of the fulfilment of the aim of peaceful co-existence and the banishing of the menace of a third world war.

Harvest of the Twentieth Congress

If it is asked what has made possible these striking changes in the climate of international relations, discussion and opinion, which have made themselves felt at an accelerating pace over these past three years, and which today are universally agreed to be opening out new and hopeful perspectives, there can be no question of the answer. The answer lies in the profound underlying changes of the world situation which were highlighted at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The answer lies in the increasing peaceful strength, manifest invincibility, success of economic construction and scientific advance of the socialist world, constituting close on two-fifths of mankind. The answer lies in the sweeping advance of the former colonial peoples, with India in the forefront, to fulfil an independent world rôle on the side of peace and the extension of friendly relations with the socialist countries for peace and economic co-operation. The answer lies, not least, in the positive and constructive response of the Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist world to the new possibilities and opportunities arising from this changed balance of the world situation: the bold new initiatives for peace and the improvement of international relations; the far-reaching and imaginative planning for new economic achievement and the extension of international economic aid; and, as an integral part of this, the most drastic self-criticism and review in the internal field to lay bare and correct whatever required correction from the preceding period, in order to liberate the fullest creative forces of Marxism and the peoples for the era before us.

The Great Renewal

This gigantic process of review, correction and renewal, extending to every field, of political and legal structure and administration, of party organisation and methods of leadership, of ideology and

research, and also of policy, both economic and in the field of international relations, has been developing over the past three years in the Soviet Union since the death of Stalin, and reached a high culminating point at the Twentieth Congress in February, in a way which has held the attention of the world. It has extended, and is extending, through all the countries of the socialist world. Every day brings significant new developments. A mighty process has been set in motion, which is itself a reflection of the maturity of socialism that such changes (including corrections of certain serious deformations and violations of essential principles of socialist and party democracy) has become possible, and possible without internal convulsions. The process that has been set in motion is still sweeping forward, and will assuredly bring many further and beneficial changes. It is of profound significance, not only for the socialist world, but for the whole international working class movement and for the entire field of international relations. This renewal and correction is not only helping the development of the socialist world. It is also encouraging and stimulating a new attitude on the part of the non-socialist world to promote a more favourable atmosphere for friendly relations and peaceful co-existence. The Twentieth Congress has itself become a powerful factor in the new world situation.

Indivisible Whole

This review, correction and renewal is an integral and indispensable part of the whole new approach and vast new perspectives opened by the Twentieth Congress. It is evident from correspondence received that some incidental remarks made in last month's Notes (p. 192, lines 2-10), referring to this aspect of the Congress, were unfortunately worded in such a way as to give rise to justifiable criticism. It was not the purpose of these very incidental remarks in nine lines to deal with this aspect of the Congress, but only to explain why the broadest mass issues of the 'Great Debate' now opening, which it was the subject of last month's Notes to discuss, turned on the 'larger' questions of the future of peace, the transition to socialism, and unity of the labour movement, and that the special questions of the analysis of the past in relation to the rôle of Stalin or the abuses of the security organs in a preceding period, however intense the discussion of them among more limited sections, should not be emphasised at the expense of the great issues of the present and the future.

A Welcome to Criticism

But it is clear from letters of criticism received from valued readers, to whom we express our thanks, that the character of these remarks caused offence and that it was unsatisfactory to treat the question in this fashion. The attempt to correct one unbalance led to another. The treatment created the impression first, of counterposing the self-critical aspects of the Congress to the 'larger' issues of the future perspective; second, of summarily brushing aside the grave questions involved under cover of historical generalities; third, of discounting or appearing to treat contemptuously the shock caused by the gravity of the revelations and the inevitable emotional feelings aroused; and fourth, and most serious, of appearing to treat the questions as only questions of the past and therefore to underestimate the profound present and future significance of the questions of principle involved and the lessons to be drawn for the whole working class movement. We accordingly owe all our apologies to our readers for having unwittingly created such an impression by these incidental remarks, and hasten to endeavour to repair the damage by treating a little more fully some of the major questions involved.

From the Past to the Future

It would be undoubtedly mistaken and misleading to endeavour to separate the drastic review of the past and self-criticism at the Twentieth Congress from the inspiring and breath-taking perspectives for the future of socialism, peace and human advance held out at the same Congress, as if they were negative and positive aspects of the Congress. There can be no question here of saying that 'on the one hand' the Congress presented most grievous revelations with regard to a past period which could only cause pain, but that 'on the other hand' the Congress presented with a sure and factually justified self-confidence most positive perspectives for the future, both for communist construction, and for peace and the prospects of the working class movement and socialism, which could only cause joy. The two aspects are inseparable parts of a single whole. It is precisely the drastic review and self-criticism that helps to lay the basis, not only for the practical correction of defects, malpractices and shortcomings revealed in the preceding period, but for the re-assertion of the basic principles of Marxism and Leninism, the enormous strengthening of socialist and party democracy, and thereby the liberation of all the creative forces of

the people and their Communist Party, and of living Marxism, with its inherent ceaseless criticism and discussion, from certain straight-jacket conditions which had grown up in a specific period and had become a dangerous impediment to growth and to the true freedom which is the heart of Communism.

Indispensable Review

Hence it was essential to carry through the drastic review, the reassessment in relation to the rôle of Stalin in his later period, and the ruthless uncovering of serious evils, violations of certain essential principles of party collective leadership and functioning, and of socialist legality, and arising out of these conditions, the criminal misdeeds which accompanied and stained an era of heroic achievement and basically correct policy. This review was no mere post-mortem on the past. It was the indispensable basis for the approach to the tasks of the present and the future. History will deal in due time, through the successive work of future historians, with the final assessment, or attempted final assessment (for it may well be that controversy will long rage, and pass through many phases yet) of this era of two decades of such unique significance for the future of humanity, its achievements and shortcomings, its policies and personalities, its glories and its shames.

Verdict of History

Future history will assuredly not fail to pay tribute to the epic accomplishment of this period, the completion of the construction of socialism, the withstanding of the onslaught of the Nazi blitzkrieg before which every other army had fallen, the joint victory over fascism, and the speed of reconstruction from the heaviest devastation ever known, under the conditions of the perpetual menace and harassment of the cold war from the war-enriched and unscathed United States. Future history will not fail to pay tribute to the heroism, unity and heaven-storming achievement of the Soviet people through these ordeals, the policy and leadership of the party, and the genius, unyielding courage, steadfastness and devotion to the revolution of Stalin, also in this later period when black pages blotted the record, and when some of his very virtues turned to defects, his steel-hardness to harshness, his unwavering shouldering of responsibility to methods of personal leadership, and his vigilance and suspicion, indispensable in every true revolutionary, to an increasingly violent frenzy which caused executions, not only

of counter-revolutionary enemies and agents, but also of friends and comrades.

Great Principles at Issue

It was not the task of the Twentieth Congress to anticipate the final verdict of history. The task of the Twentieth Congress was to bring out and emphasise precisely what was negative in the record, because it was this that required to be corrected and to be made known in order that it should be corrected. Hence the misleading appearance of an unbalanced emphasis, as has sometimes been suggested in some criticisms of the treatment, of the negative aspects of Stalin's record (although in fact it is evident, from the summaries which have been made available, that the Report to the private session of the Congress did in fact pay full tribute to the rôle of Stalin as the strongest Marxist leader after the death of Lenin, and to his leading rôle in maintaining the unity of the party against disruption and faction, in the accomplishment of industrialisation and in the collectivisation of agriculture). There was no unbalanced emphasis in relation to the task in hand. The task of the Congress was, not to make the final balanced assessment of the scholar in his study, but to fulfil an urgent practical need, to complete the review and correction of shortcomings and grave abuses which had already been conducted by the Central Committee during the preceding three years, to draw in the entire membership of the party and the Soviet people to full knowledge and participation in this review, reassessment and correction, and thereby to re-establish essential principles of Marxist-Leninist theory and practice which had been violated. It is these principles, of collective leadership and functioning of the party, of inner-party democracy and the methods of democratic centralism, of socialist democracy and legality, of the combination of freedom with planned organisation and unity, and of the creative critical spirit of Marxism as against dogmatism and routinism, that are brought into the forefront of attention by this review and the discussions arising therefrom, and that are of such vital urgency, not merely within the countries of socialism, but in the working class movement of all countries, for the fulfilment of the tasks of the present and the advance to the future.

Personal Rule?

Was Stalin a 'dictator', a 'tyrant', or (as the *Daily Herald*, somewhat oddly 'summarising' the recent British Communist Executive statement on the issues, announces) a 'scoundrel'? Were

those associated with him or communists in other countries 'servile sycophants' prostrated before a supposed 'infallible idol'? This current melodramatic press picture is a travesty of the most serious, critical and, incidentally, iconoclastic movement in human history, the revolutionary communist movement. The real situation and problem which arose, and which was summarised in the Twentieth Congress formula as the 'cult of the individual', was of a very different character from these novelette-style vapourings. There was here no parallel with the traditional forms of one-man rule, with Bonapartism or the Fuehrerprinzip or fascist dictatorship. There was here no question of a proclamation of a constitution placing all power in the hands of one man, of an Emperor or a Leader, as the sole repository of power, from whom all authority is declared to spring (the authoritarian principle). On the contrary. The unique and peculiar character of the situation which arose during this period was that nothing was changed in the basis of class power, the socialist soviet power of the working people who had expropriated the capitalists and landlords, constructed socialism and were advancing to communism. The party continued to lead the people. Nor was the main basic policy incorrect. This was the very period when the Webbs were describing the 'multiform democracy' of the Soviet Union as the widest participation of the largest numbers of ordinary men and women in the administration of their affairs that had ever been evolved. And it was true. Without this the gigantic creative achievement of the Soviet people throughout this period would never have been possible. The evils that arose affected primarily the functioning of the apparatus rather than the essence of the class power of the working people, although the violation of collective leadership had also harmful effects in particular spheres of policy, as in relation to agriculture and the break with Yugoslavia. Throughout this period, despite all the evils, the masses of the people were continuing to enjoy and exercise self-rule in running their affairs to a degree unknown in any capitalist democracy, and continuing to justify Lenin's description of Soviet democracy as the highest form of democracy yet known.

Personal and Collective Leadership

What, then, went wrong? What happened was that in a period of heavy strain after the rise of fascism, of continual war or threat-of-war conditions, the practice of leadership began to depart from the correct constitutional forms. During this period after fascism

—not previously, not therefore inherently in the system of Soviet democracy or democratic centralism—Stalin, on the basis of the unique and well-earned theoretical and practical authority and mass influence he had won through his previous record of wise and successful Marxist leadership in the battle against disruption and for the victorious construction of socialism, began to operate new methods of working which departed from the methods of Lenin and the previous practice of the Communist Party. The change developed, not in a moment, not by decree, but step by step, at first without general realisation, after the Seventeenth Congress in 1934. With close lines of direct contact with the masses (the collective farms, factories, shock brigades, etc., began to send their messages and reports and pledges directly to him as the embodiment of the party instead of to the Central Committee), and with the widest party and non-party masses looking to him as the wisest and ablest revolutionary leader in whom they felt full confidence, Stalin entered on the dangerous path of beginning increasingly to take major decisions in his individual capacity, without waiting for the endorsement of committee consultations. The machinery of the meetings of the central committee and congresses ceased to function regularly. This was the essence of the ‘cult of the individual’ which is often distorted in the vulgarised press treatment as if it were expressed in the ‘adulation’ of a great individual. The sometimes moving, sometimes flowery and distasteful eulogies were a symptomatic excrescence (though not without considerably more solid foundation than is usual in such cases). But the essence of the ‘cult of the individual’ was the violation of collective leadership.

Collective Leadership and the Security Organs

This situation, which could have been corrected under normal conditions by reference to the rules, was complicated in these emergency conditions by the fact that the rôle of the security organs was correctly and necessarily enlarged to meet the increased menace of enemy penetration, but that, under the influence of Stalin’s theory of the intensification of the class struggle after the victory of socialism, these powers began to be exercised in extreme forms, and with illegal means, and fell into the hands of criminal controllers who used them, not only against enemy agents and traitors, but against all elements expressing or suspected of opposition or criticism, including some of the finest revolutionary comrades with outstanding records who were unjustly executed or imprisoned.

Once this combined situation had developed, of Stalin's personal methods of leadership, his overwhelming mass influence and popularity, the abuse of the security organs, and the constant external menace and emergency conditions, a unique problem had arisen in which to have opened a direct battle against the character of Stalin's personal leadership could have meant the visible danger of a factional fight disrupting the party, tearing the country in two, opening the front to the enemy and wrecking the revolution. Hence it was not until after a very serious prolongation of this phase that the problem could be effectively tackled. But the essence of the problem was the violation of collective leadership, and the question of the abuses of the security organs should not be separated from this. Once collective leadership was restored there was no difficulty in establishing full control over the security organs and restoring and strengthening the effective functioning of socialist democracy.

Was it Inevitable?

'To understand all is to forgive all', says the French proverb. But in the revolutionary movement there can be no forgiveness for what goes wrong, even where its causes can be understood. It is inevitable in general that no revolution in real life can correspond to some idealist dream of one hundred per cent. perfection, that in every revolution there will be, not only achievement, but also excesses and abuses, not only heroes, but also malefactors. We can glory that the revolution has conquered in spite of all. But no particular evil, shortcoming or abuse in its course is therefore inevitable or to be excused, least of all, such serious abuses as took place during the twenty years under review. It is sometimes suggested that the elements of social backwardness inherited from pre-revolutionary Russia, with the still recent advance to the victory of socialism, created the conditions for the retrogressive tendencies expressed in the 'cult of the individual'. There is a measure of truth in this, but only in part. For the survivals of backwardness were even more present during the period 1917-34, during which these evils did not arise.

External Backwardness

Hence we must also see the external conditions of backwardness in Western and Central Europe expressed in the victory of fascism, which created an unparalleled problem and ordeal for the new socialist state, a menace compared to which the wars of intervention

were child's play. It was under those conditions that it was evidently judged necessary to weld and strengthen the solidarity of the entire people, including the peasant masses most recently emerging from backwardness to socialism, not merely with the appeal of socialism and soviet loyalty and the party, but with every appeal, the national and patriotic appeal, the religious appeal for all attached to the church, and the personal symbol of the régime of the working people embodied in the leadership of Stalin. The name of Stalin inspired confidence and heroism among countless millions. But experience revealed that this method of political leadership, however understandable in the period in which it arose (and when it bore a corresponding significance as an expression of the solidarity of the international communist movement) entailed grave shortcomings in practice, which required to be corrected. These corrections have now been made.

Our Responsibility

Let us never forget that fascism arose, not through the fault of the Soviet people, but through our weakness, in our movements in Western and Central Europe, that we never carried through the socialist revolution alongside them, but opened the gates to the fascist monster, and then depended on their strength and sacrifice to vanquish it. They were the first to carry through the socialist revolution, to chart the unknown paths, to face and pass through limitless ordeals. Our path of transition may be easier, thanks to them, but to our shame, not to our honour. It is sometimes suggested that we should have criticised them more in the midst of their ordeals to give them the benefit of our advice on how to run things. Perhaps they might have answered, 'Show us first, dear comrades, that you know how to lead the masses, to win and hold power, and we shall be glad to learn from you'. Our responsibility was not that we failed to join the ranks of their critics (there was no lack of such); or even that we in good faith repeated mistaken charges emanating from sources that alone had the means and the opportunity to judge them, but which subsequent review proved to be unfounded; or that we sought so far as was in our power to inspire the enthusiasm and solidarity of our peoples for the first socialist revolution and the first socialist state. Our responsibility above all was that, with all the objective conditions ripe for socialist revolution in Western and Central Europe, such as would have solved all the problems alike for the Russian and all the peoples of Europe to march forward together

in happy and peaceful construction, we were not successful to mobilise our peoples and left them to struggle alone until their own strength opened the way to the first victories of socialism beyond the Soviet Union and the beginning of the world system of socialism.

Pains and Shocks

There are those who say that to find joy and thankfulness in the frank review, however ugly the facts revealed, in the reassessment and the new perspective opened by the Twentieth Congress is to show callousness to the pain which must be felt for those who died unjustly, or indifference to the horror which must be felt for the revelation of criminal actions and violations of justice in a socialist society. Their vision is too short. We know also the pain of the millions who have died through capitalism, and the daily millionfold injustice of capitalist society, and we know on which side we stand. We know that the path of revolution is not without sorrow, not merely from the external enemy, but also from within.

Darkness and Sunrise

How far does the memory of some of these questioners go, to whom these revelations seem to be felt like the first shock and anguish on a hitherto stainless shield, until they almost seem ready to join the hapless ranks of those who denounced 'the god that failed'? It was pain and anguish during the twenties to see that goodly company, as it had seemed at the time, which had led the first victorious socialist revolution break up in mortal division, with successive factional fights led against the party, until the unity of the steadfast leaders around Stalin saved the party. It was no less pain and anguish during the thirties to see so many dear friends and comrades, some of whom, like Bela Kun, have since been cleared of their sentences, revealed and proclaimed as traitors and enemy agents, until the movement seemed honeycombed with treasonable corruption. And if now the Twentieth Congress has revealed that the party was not seething with traitors and agents, that it was, on the contrary, the security organs that had got out of hand and gone wrong, that many of these dear friends and comrades were not traitors and agents, that although they suffered cruel and unjust deaths their revolutionary honour stands high, then some younger comrades must forgive the 'callousness' of some of us longer in the movement that this feels, not like the end of the

world, not like 'the god that failed', but like the sunrise breaking through the clouds and the dawn of a new day.

Learning the Lessons

Above all, let us learn the lessons and strive to apply them for our own movement and for the future. The review and the reassessment at the Twentieth Congress, no less than the positive perspectives held out, have undoubtedly a very wide international significance for the working class movement in all countries. It has emphasised, not only the new world situation and the new opportunities that are opening out, but the fresh and flexible and imaginative approach that is necessary, with ruthless self-criticism of our own weaknesses, in order to respond to the new opportunities. It has given a stimulus to the development of creative Marxism in place of superficial routine thinking and clinging to readymade formulas. It has helped to remove many obstacles to closer mutual understanding and co-operation of all sections of the working class, at the same time as its whole teaching has emphasised, not in opposition to this aim of unity, but in integral association with it, the indispensable rôle of a strongly based Marxist-Leninist party of the working class, the Communist Party, to act as the vanguard for the whole movement. Within Britain we can feel the new tide that is stirring, not only in the field of industry, with the marked militant advances, but also, despite the difficulties of the present situation within the political labour movement, in the political field, as partially shown in the local elections. There is the beginning of a new climate, not only in international relations, but within the labour movement in Britain. Within the Communist Party the process of renovation and democratic strengthening is sweeping forward. Within broad sections of the labour movement the discussions for co-operation and a new policy extend. The recent contribution of G. D. H. Cole, rebutting the contention of the Socialist International Bureau that socialism and communism have nothing in common, is a welcome sign of the times. If Sir Winston Churchill in his eighty-second year can respond, from his standpoint, along new and constructive lines to meet a new world situation, let us hope that we in the British Labour Movement can also respond in a new and constructive fashion to the much greater opportunities that are within our reach in order to advance with united strength to the fulfilment of the tasks before us.

May 16, 1956.

R.P.D.