

# More Letters about the Soviet Congress

Following are more letters in the current discussion of American Marxists and the Soviet Union. Letters over 300 words cannot be printed in full.

## Collective Work Not a Mystery

LOS ANGELES

Editor, Daily Worker:

I have read Joseph Clark's article dealing with the "New Policy" in the Soviet Union, with much interest. In the main, I find myself in agreement with his position.

Now I may be naive, but it is my belief that when a worker's party meets in convention and issues statements, the purpose of those statements is to express as clearly and as accurately as possible, the position that has been arrived at as the result of prior discussion in the organization and with persons not in the organization. I am naive enough, in other words, to believe that in the documents of the 20th Congress mean exactly what they say, no more, and no less; and I interpret them to mean:

1. All men and women are human and therefore liable to err. That includes Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Krushchev, Foster, you and I.

2. Therefore all decisions should be the result of collective thinking. As my father used to say, "Two heads are better than one, even if one is a sheep's head."

3. The party in the Soviet Union, as the leading party of socialism in the world, and the governing party of a large country, has the responsibility to end the tendency to the glorification of the individual and place him in perspective in history and in relationship to the group.

In other words, it is necessary for each individual to work collectively and submit the results of his thinking to collective examination; and it is necessary that all planning, all thinking be done collectively. This, in my opinion, implies to derogation of the individual, but rather a calm, objective approach to all individuals and all problems.

In attempting to appraise the tremendous accomplishments of the Soviet Union in the past 20 years, and in rejecting any adulation of the individuals involved but placing the emphasis on the group and their collective accomplishments, the party of the Soviet Union is setting an example of collective work to the world, taking collective responsibility for errors, as they should, and setting the stage for greater accomplishments.

Those progressives who are looking for mysterious reasons and whispering about mysterious crimes that the capitalist press is shouting about, are, in my opinion, merely falling into the trap set for them by the capitalist press.—N.B.

## Unavoidable Development

Editor, Daily Worker:

It seems to me that it was unavoidable, under the then existing conditions, that a Stalin should have emerged during the still formative years of the Soviet Union. The country, as is well known was surrounded by a whole world of openly menacing powers. And if the new Russia was to survive the pack of wolf-nations (led by the mighty U.S.A.) that were out to strangle the Soviet Union in its cradle, it had to build its defensive strength, literally, with super-human effort and speed. Far-reaching and tremendously complex and difficult decisions had to be made: the life of a nation

—the first Socialist state—a colossal dream come true—had to be made secure, or it would die.

These leaders who today rise like great new giants and hurl denunciatory rocks at the body of the dead Stalin must have been very willing to let that same Stalin make the decisions then. They did not dare assume the responsibility in those fateful critical days. Otherwise Stalin could not have attained such frightful, overwhelming personal power. But they were the eager and willing water, as it were, that, inevitably, made the Stalin plant grow.

Now they howl with vast, self-righteous indignation! It would become them much better if they would, first, publicly make slashing, punishing attacks upon themselves.

I think it would have been far wiser and much more constructive to let a later generation (from which they would be excluded) to be the judge of Stalin. Meanwhile, they could have instituted whatever changes in policy they thought desirable at present (among the most welcome of which are the substitution of collective for individual leadership and a resort to democratic practices generally), without this accompanying disruptive and harmful upheaval. The mind cries out: If there was so much self-serving invention substituted for fact all along, not, as far as we know, opposed by the present leaders, how do we know that they are telling the truth now?

As for us, the supreme lesson in this whole horrifying and shocking business is not to be creatures dancing to the (often unintelligible) grimaces of others, but to use our brains in our own right, creatively, never abdicating individuality. Otherwise, the sun and the stars, the heavens and the earth—the whole universe placed in our pockets, would be worthless.—A.S.

## Importance Of Facts

Editor, Daily Worker:

I am a former schoolteacher, a victim of the continuing witch-hunt in N.Y. school system.

Alan Max's article in which he asked some relevant and honest questions was very much in order. The ensuing discussion, in my opinion, represents a milestone in the history of our paper. The frankness, sincerity, and pointedness of the discussion fills the pages of the DW with some much needed fresh air.

Different readers will approach the discussion from different angles. My immediate circle consists of teachers, artists, writers. Many of whom were members of our organization at one time.

All of them are sympathetic to our cause, but were incapable of stomaching a blind, uncritical allegiance to the USSR. They resented the papal infallibility attributed to Stalin. They resented the attitude of many Communists who think that one becomes a Marxist simply by adopting the name and memorizing a few quotes from the Marxist classics.

This latter technique used as a substitute for the hard grinding study required to unravel the complex problems of our time.

The current discussion proves that we are seriously trying to combat these evils. We must also LEARN HOW to combat them. In this respect the leadership has a profound responsibility. To that degree will we be able to win over people to our cause.

While on this subject, credit

must and should be given to such people and publications as I. F. Stone, Corliss Lamont, William Mandel, the Monthly Review for being much closer to the truth on many of the issues of the past few years than we were. We have much to learn from their approach which insists that the facts be well established before conclusions can be drawn with any degree of scientific accuracy.

—A Daily Reader from Queens

## Failed to Review Chinese Literature

Editor, Daily Worker:

On Alan Max's point of placing emphasis on "three years of criticism and examination in their daily lives. . . ." Such a statement shows a clear lack of reading of Soviet newspapers and magazines such as New Times, Soviet Literature, Soviet Woman and For a Lasting Peace. You would see that criticism has been going on for many, many years.

You say, "We should give thought to our own role in accepting many things about the Soviet Union which Soviet Marxists are now criticizing." It would be better put if we say that if we accepted such ideas, we did so because we did not trouble to read the literature and press of the Soviet Union and thus be in a position to realize the truth of these matters. In other words, a real criticism would be of our own reading habits in this country — of reading only the sensational, the exciting, the "one day wonder."

You say that "We discouraged serious discussion and criticism of Soviet books, etc." Here I can wholeheartedly agree with you. The Daily Worker has certainly discouraged serious discussion by NOT reviewing Soviet books and books from China in many months (years?). The Daily has not reviewed or made known the many fine books that are here—in English. (Only one Chinese novel has ever been reviewed—and that was one NOT available in English!)—"UNJOLTED"

## A Progressive Society

Editor, Daily Worker:

The exciting discussion that the radical departure from the doctrine of Stalinism the present leaders of the Soviet Union has provoked opens opportunities favorable for conscientious, fair-minded Marxists to welcome the said departure as a historical necessity that, thus regarded, cannot be other than providing purifying qualities bound to accelerate the advance of Soviet society along better roads for self-improvement.

Already the Soviet society has in its favor a phenomenal record of a sustained march forward despite tremendous obstacles thrown in its way by outside enemy forces during the span of 37 years if its life.

In science, technology and education that society has made impressive advances. Unquestionable it is a PROGRESSIVE society. At no time has it weakened in its advocacy of world peace and friendly co-existence with the rest of the nations. It has set an example many of the colonial and so-called backward countries are emulating.

—OBSERVANT

## Two Important Steps

Editor, Daily Worker:

The recent column by Alan Max is a most welcome new feature in my favorite news-

paper. I was especially heartened that his tenor was one which invited frank discussion.

While pain must accompany this criticism, child-birth is also attended by pain. Yet birth is indispensable to motherhood.

I think there may have been mitigating factors in the Soviet errors re: Stalin just as defense against the "cold war" was mitigation for us. But when in the history of our movement were there not such explanations? Expedience is not its own justification.

An objective re-examination of our recent past has been developing ever since the publication of "The American Way." One important reason for this was that this program first appeared as a draft with the clearest indication that frank discussion was not merely allowed—but vital to a correct line.

The Marxist movement needs more of this kind of leadership . . . a leadership which listens to the masses as John Swift in his many articles in Political Affairs. Our leadership has a responsibility to compel that wide range of free-wheeling thought. This is the only real test of political line. It is the only path of creative Marxism.

Frankly, we have not yet created such an atmosphere within and around our movement. To be wrong or seem to be wrong has been made to appear as anti-Party. To affirm the profound contributions of Marxists and leading Marxists is not to defend the thesis what we have a monopoly on brains. Our minds have not always been the best. They could have been better if we learned the art of listening as well as we learned the art of talking.

This, I feel, is a responsibility of the movement in general. But it is a responsibility of the leadership in the first place. The article by Alan Max is an important step in that direction. That the Daily Worker printed it is a second contribution. The reaction which these two things have triggered is an indication of the potential which exists in such a free, uninhibited atmos-

phere.—G. P.

## Discussion Held Good Sign

Editor, Daily Worker:

The decision to throw the columns of the Daily Worker open to readers' comments about the 20th Congress of the CPUS is perhaps the best indication that the lessons of that Congress are being properly understood here. Criticism and self-criticism must be complete and open to be self-corrective.

The warning that we have heard repeatedly that criticism must be "constructive" has too often meant the stifling of honest criticism.

We demand of the bourgeoisie that they permit free discussion of socialist ideas, quoting at them the dictum that truth has nothing to fear from free discussion. Too often we have failed to apply it within our own ranks. It seems to me that a certain contempt for the rank and file is implied in the constant fear that "Destructive" criticism had to be stifled—as though American Marxists were not mature enough to be able to recognize the argument of a provocateur.

William Z. Foster emphasizes that the serious errors of Stalin can be evaluated "most authoritatively only by those leaders who have worked closely with him in the top circles of the CP and government of the Soviet Union." It would be hard to quarrel with the accuracy of this statement, but I wonder what is the purpose of it—to have us all hold our breaths until the official line comes out?

We need more documents to discuss intelligently, but we need also an attitude of critical examination—of the same critical examination we have when reading statements from the leaders of capitalist states. The fact that Togliatti and Ulbricht say Stalin was wrong to maintain that the class struggle continues after socialism has been built does not prove Stalin wrong. Who said what is unimportant. What matters is, where is the truth? Let's insist on it.—HANK

# Lehman Calls for Plan Of Full-Scale Housing

Daily Worker Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON, March 28—Sen. Herbert Lehman (D-NY) urged Tuesday attacking the housing crisis on a "crash" basis. Lehman told the Senate Banking Subcommittee on housing that only a "full scale" housing program, "designed to meet the needs of all income groups, and all persons without regard to race" can "forestall the housing crisis that is descending upon our nation."

Lehman, who appeared before the subcommittee on behalf of his own bill, S-3158, charged that the Administration is committed to a "cheap low number" of housing units "in order to appease the Congressional opponents of all public housing."

Two or three of the larger cities could utilize all of the 35,000 low income units per year proposed by the Administration for the entire nation. There would be nothing "left over for the rest of the nation," Lehman said.

He condemned the attitude of Albert Cole, Housing and Home Finance Administrator, who in previous testimony before the committee pleaded ignorance of the housing needs of low income and middle income families or on what was required to rehouse low income families displaced by slum

clearance and urban renewal programs.

Today, Lehman said, the nation is building about half the new homes of the American people need.

"Housing for our low income families is lagging far behind the need," Lehman said. "Housing for minority groups is a national disgrace."

"No one denies that we could eliminate every substandard home in America if we really wished to do so." We should not wait for an economic slump or an acute housing crisis before we authorize a program of the size needed."

He recounted to the committee the main features of the bill which he and nine other Democrats have introduced. It would:

- Authorize construction of 200,000 units a year for each of three years for low rent public housing. Ten percent of these units would be for elderly couples and elderly single persons.

- Would establish a national mortgage corporation with authority of \$1 billion to make loans for housing for middle income families.