

APPEAL BY CLERICS REJECTED BY REDS

6 Convicted Leaders Concede Unjust and Illegal Acts Committed in Russia

Six Communists convicted last week under the Smith Act rejected yesterday a public appeal by a group of religious leaders to turn from their "evil course."

The so-called "second string" Communist leaders who were found guilty in Federal Court of conspiracy to teach and advocate violent overthrow of the Government were: George Blake Charney, Alexander Trachtenberg, James E. Jackson, Sidney Stein, William Norman and Fred M. Fine.

They were not addressed directly in the appeal, but took it upon themselves, nevertheless, to answer. The appeal was published on July 31 by the Foundation for Religious Action in the Social and Civil Order. It was signed by fifty-five American clergymen and laymen of various faiths.

The open letter told those Communists "perplexed" by the downgrading of Stalin that while it was not shameful to have made a mistake, it was shameful "to go on in an evil course" now. The letter declared that the "totalitarian way is the graveyard of human values and hope."

The six Communists replied in an open letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Charles Wesley Lowry, chairman of the foundation. The letter was made public by the Joint Self Defense Committee, 11 Park Place.

In the letter the Communists agreed that "there is evil in condoning evil." They also accepted responsibility for not having condemned unjust and illegal acts in the Soviet Union, although they did not mention Stalin.

Deny "Evil Course"

"Where we probably disagree," the Communists said, "is that socialism is incompatible with political liberty or that the Soviet Union is inherently incapable of restoring and extending democracy."

They took "strong exception" to the characterizing of their acts as an "evil course." They asked whether fighting against racial segregation, helping to build up the labor movement, opposing hydrogen bombs, or advocating socialism constituted an evil course.

Then, they turned to the attack, demanding of the "fine liberal personalities" among the signers of the foundation's letter why they were so keen to decry Soviet crimes but so quiet on injustice in America.

"Where is the passion for Presidential amnesty for Elizabeth Gurley Flynn [Communist leader now in prison for violation of the Smith Act]?" the Communists asked. "Where is the passion for effective execution of the Supreme Court's decision on desegregation? Where is the passion to punish the killers of Negroes who dare to vote in Mississippi? Where is the passionate demand by the two major parties for civil rights legislation?"

"May it not be said that to sanction denial of political liberty to Communists and other dissenters is an evil course? May it not be said that to sanction Jim Crowism is also an evil course? Is not placid acceptance of the professional political informer system an evil course?"

The Communists admitted they sounded bitter because the foundation's appeal was published on the same day that they were convicted of conspiring to advocate their "political views."

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