

## Humility Needed

Editor, Daily Worker:

Alan Max's March 13 column on U. S. Marxists and Soviet Self-Criticism was a most welcome statement which I hope will open up a thorough-going review of American Communist policies and methods.

Alan Max should not apologize for his lack of calm in face of the Soviet "criticism of the past 20 years and of shortcomings in the leadership of Stalin." Certainly the time for his being jolted was long overdue.

Speaking only of the last few years, he and his co-editors have followed the successive flip-flops with amazing jolt-proof gymnastic dexterity, without ever being at a loss for editorial words. The doctors were plotting, the doctors were not; Beria was in, Beria was out; Tito was out, Tito was in; Yugoslavia was a dictatorship with ruthless suppression of opposition, Yugoslavia is finding its independent path to socialism; Stalin is up, Stalin is down.

Making due allowance for the distortions and caricatures of Soviet policy that appear in the capitalist press, why did the Daily Worker editors feel called upon to go along with each successive position without ever having the humility to admit that they may have been wrong in their previous position? In fact, before Alan Max's column of March 13, the Daily Worker editors had carved out a position even more unassailable than the Soviet leaders have claimed for themselves. The Soviet leaders admitted to previous mistakes. The DW editors smoothly absorbed the new positions without a backward glance.

You might make it a policy to read your old editorials before writing new ones, and you might start by reading some of your previous editorials on Joseph Stalin and Joe Clark on-the-scene coverage of Stalin's funeral, which reported his immense popularity with the people.

Alan Max writes that he is bothered by whether the Soviet leaders are "giving proper weight to the achievement of Stalin." I hope the DW editors will in time arrive at a truthful estimate of Stalin. It may well turn out to be a more human and less-than-superman version of the man than was previously presented, and it may also turn out to be more appreciative than the role the present Soviet leaders will assign him.

The Soviet government may find it politically expedient to discard Stalin in its search for dramatic and new approaches to co-existence. American Marxists can recognize and understand why this is done without feeling called upon to support such a position uncritically.—M. K.

## Growing Pains, Not Weakness

Editor, Daily Worker:

Mr. James Wechsler, able general of the New York Post's liberal legions, apparently feels very strongly about the matter of communist ideology.

Mr. Wechsler draws about the same conclusions from the shift of the cult of the individualist to that of collective leadership in the Soviet Union as Mr. Dulles. Only he goes Mr. Dulles one further; he attempts to utilize the confusion caused by this shift as a sad example of moral bankruptcy on the part of Communist Party members, and cites Alan Max as a horrible example.

He says in effect, "Take poor Max, multiply his example by millions of party members and you'll get a fair sample of the condition of the party as a whole."

He urges the State Department to take cognizance of his disarming simplification of the whole matter and act accordingly.

# Letters from Readers

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

ly. He is not too hopeful, however, that the policy makers in Washington will cash in on his suggestion. They are, as he says, notably lax in exercising their imaginations.

Though a non-Communist I see no contradiction in the shift of policy. The cult of the individual was not fostered by Stalin. The USSR made tremendous gains under collective leadership. One has only to look at the vast program of education, one has only to listen to the despairing comparisons made by eminent men in the western world, to realize that the shift of emphasis is no, as Mr. Wechsler would have us believe, an acknowledgment of ideological bankruptcy. Quite the contrary; it is a loosening of the strings. Growing pains must never be confused with weakness. Rebellion against a stern father will hurt nobody, and least of all those who once wholeheartedly subscribed to his teachings, once it has been demonstrated that not all of the old methods apply to the new situation.

James Wechsler has made a pardonable mistake, that of applying to the surface appearance of events a thin coat of personal prejudice. He should understand by now that anti-communism as such has caused us enough grief.

WELL WISHER.

## A Common Front Against War

Editor, Daily Worker:

We were forced to the reluctant conclusion—probably to be expected—that the profound lessons of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party have not even begun to be absorbed by the progressive people of America.

As a take-off point, we'll refer to Alan Max's carping and (we think) realtively incorrect criticism of the New York Times because of its interpretation of Krushchev's insistence on the possibility in many countries of achieving socialism by peaceful, parliamentary means. (We are also glad to say that Mr. Max did, in his later article of March 13, introduce a somewhat different questioning note).

In future discussion of the broad, humane approach of the sermon, we re-discovered the forgotten principle (perhaps due to the violent swing away from Browderism) that there is almost no institution, or group, or movement, or what have you, that is not at times, as history moves, on the side of the people (as it may at others be an enemy).

Now the 20th Congress failed to aim a serious attack—as had been the unchanging principle for years—against the Socialist parties.

Instead, it extended the hand of friendship to them in the interest of preventing the main danger facing mankind today: its own utter destruction in a war waged with the new weapons and missiles. The Congress, it seemed to us, made peace the primary objective, and tried to widen our perspective of the world's peace forces (well expressed in James Allen's article) to include not only the Socialists but ALL OTHER elements who want and/or need peace, and are therefore potential allies.

It is in this spirit of finding a common program for all who oppose war that we think the Communist Party and the Daily Worker have the obligation to try to enlist, among others, the New York Times. To take bitter

issue with it on "evolutionary" Communism is not to win, but to alienate an important section of the American people.

It must be remembered that in its own fight against McCarthyism, the Times took a principled position, even though not yet fully realizing that the denial of civil rights to Communists, and even to its own employees, opens and eases the way to similar attacks on all other democratic elements, including itself. The fact that it already has been banned from the schools of an upstate community is certainly an indication that its stand has not gone unnoticed by the enemies of freedom and enlightenment.

—REGULAR READER.

## Says He Finds Inconsistencies

Editor, Daily Worker:

Ring Lardner, Jr., in his letter rebuking the attitude of complacency of James Allen and others on the lessons of the 20th Congress suggested it is high time for the American left to undertake a searching examination of itself. Along these lines I should like to cite a few inconsistencies which are not so much important for themselves as for the light they shed on the dogmatism and unimaginativeness in which many questions are approached.

1. In 1945 the National Committee, with the honorable exception of Foster and I think one other, could only explain their reversal following publication of the Duclos letter as due to cult of the leadership of Browder and weaknesses in democratic centralism resulting therefrom. The same people, this time I am afraid including Foster, went right down the line in finding nothing at all serious in the far greater and more maudlin cult of the leadership of Stalin. All kinds of explanations were found to justify it.

2. Almost the day after his death this whole disgusting business ceased. In its place was found an emphasis on collective leadership. One of the favorite defenses of the idolatry had been, Oh, Stalin himself doesn't like it, but he is only one person, and can do nothing about it. Where in the left press, when it was clear that this argument had been wrong, did we get a recognition of error? To the contrary, our press went blithely on to new explanations, fully inconsistent with the former one—the new leadership wished to stand on its own feet, etc. If space permitted, one could multiply such examples from treatment on the Negro nation question, and many others.

3. Foster, in his article on the reevaluation of Stalin, gives as extenuating circumstances for errors by the American left its practice of letting each foreign party make its own evaluation of events in its own country, which we accepted. Surely at the time Duclos letter on Browderism was published in France, Foster did not feel that critical evaluation of another party concerning American affairs was ruled out? How then could a party which had been the beneficiary of advice from a sister party not feel the responsibility to reciprocate by critically examining great issues which were obviously in great controversy? Even though here it is the Soviet Union, and not the French party, is there not a fundamental inconsistency here?—N.J.

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