

DIFFICULTIES OF FRATERNAL DISCUSSION

By ALAN MAX

IT IS NOT a simple matter to conduct that "mutual cooperation and exchange of views in the field of scientific thought," which the Soviet and Yugoslav



Communist Parties called for in their recent declaration and in which the various Communist Parties of the world are now engaged.

A frank and fraternal discussion is no easy thing when it is conducted under the very beaks of a flock of vultures, enemies of socialism, ready to swoop down on all parties to the discussion.

The reactionary press plays a devious game. It is ready to give big headlines to every difference of opinion which any Communist Party or any Marxist expresses with regard to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It proceeds to denounce the differences of opinion as being all prearranged. It demands still more differences of opinion. Then it condemns all criticism and all answers as

refusing to face up to the "real issues."

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A CASE in point is the New York Times editorial of Tuesday. The editorial is titled "The Culprit Is Communism," which gives you a pretty good idea right off as to the impossibility of any Communist Party or individual Marxist ever satisfying the owners of the New York Times—if anyone Marxist would be crazy enough to try.

Says the Times:
"Despite their breast-beating and self-accusation the Communist leaders refuse to face up to the central issue involved in the overthrow of the Stalin myth . . . the real issue, long evident to free men everywhere, is that the horrors of Stalin's rule were not primarily the result of the aberration of Stalin or any other man but are instead inherent elements and inevitable products of the whole Communist system. . . ."

But the Times makes clear that by Communism it does not mean merely the specific governmental and party forms in the Soviet Union, but any system that is truly socialist, regardless of form. The Times warns, for example, that "com-

munist, even when called 'socialism' rests in theory on 'community' ownership of all means of production, distribution and exchange. . . ." The only socialists the Times is ready to exempt from its attack are those who "in view of the Soviet example and their own experience with nationalization of industry, began to veer away from total state ownership." In other words, a socialist is a good socialist only to the extent he "veers away" from socialism.

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IT IS THIS attempt to exploit the present discussion in order to attack the fundamentals of socialism and to glorify monopoly capitalism, which the Soviet resolution of the Soviet Communist Party warns against. This warning needs to be heeded by everyone participating in the discussion. However, in my opinion, it would be unfortunate if this warning were interpreted as meaning that the only safe way to discuss is to have no discussion at all. I am afraid that the wording and tone of the Soviet Communist Party resolution opens it up to this interpretation. I say this in spite of the fact that the Central Committee statement, in my opinion,

marks an advance in the discussion in that it presents a historical background to the "cult of the individual."

The fact is, however, that the profound questions raised by Palmiro Togliatti and others with regard to the limitations of socialist democracy in the USSR, have no relation to such anti-socialist sentiments as expressed by the New York Times and it does not help the discussion to suggest they do. In my judgement the Soviet statement does not fully answer the questions raised by Togliatti. Nor does it dispose of the matter by quoting from various Communist sources as if in opposition to Togliatti.

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THE HEART of the matter, as Togliatti sees it, is the need for the unfolding of socialist democracy. And this goes way beyond that socialist democracy which the Soviet statement says has been constantly expanding in the Soviet Union since its inception, and by which is clearly meant that economic democracy whereby for the first time in history the people have owned the means of production and which has evoked a type of creativity by scores of millions of a kind

never before known.

The truth of the matter is that the Soviet leaders do in fact admit to much of what Togliatti asserts. Could there be any more searing indictment than Khrushchev's own speech on Stalin and on the ghastly repression in the later years of the regime? Even more important, the reforms which the present Soviet leaders themselves are now proposing are in line with the very questions raised by Togliatti. They would be quite unnecessary if all that had happened was that one individual had fallen victim to megalomania.

Without endorsing all of Togliatti's analysis, and without minimizing the positive advances in the Soviet statement, I would say the most costly thing that could happen at this point would be for the international discussion to close.

I have enormous admiration for the tremendous correction which the Soviet leaders have already launched. But their task can only be lightened, the anti-socialist press confounded and lessons drawn for other countries by such serious analyses as Togliatti and others have undertaken.