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The Two Camps

The purpose of this article is to show that a major contribution to peace could be made, on the one hand, by some internal democratic reforms in the Soviet Union that would win immense support in the working-class movement in capitalist countries, and on the other, that the continued participation by the Communist Parties of the capitalist states in a monolithic Communist bloc not only limits their independence, but thereby obstructs the unification of the working-class movements, and weakens the movement for peace.

When the doctrine of the "two camps" was first enunciated by Zhdanov at the inaugural conference of the Communist Information Bureau in 1947 it was a retort to the Truman doctrine (intervention to suppress allegedly Communist movements in foreign countries) and to the Marshall Plan (which sought to knock together an anti-Soviet alliance in Europe by means of loans to which economic and military strings were attached). The cold war was initiated by the capitalist powers, and not by the Soviet Union, which had everything to lose and nothing to gain by it. To proclaim, and to organise, the solidarity of the Communist-ruled nations and the Communist Parties in the face of the Anglo-American threat was not unreasonable, provided it was made the basis at the same time for a united movement throughout the world of working-class and progressive organisations and individuals. Unfortunately, the doctrine of the two camps became not merely a legitimate expression of socialist international solidarity, but also the pretext for the most extreme chauvinism on the part of the Soviet leaders, and for the establishment of Soviet hegemony over a monolithic bloc forcefully held together not only by community of interest but by Soviet military power, economic influence, political pressure and the secret police. The Soviet Union, although in no sense the aggressor, replied to the cold war with such blind stupidity that it failed to win the support of the working-class in many capitalist countries, particularly in Western Europe. The Wroclaw conference of intellectuals was wrecked by the intolerance and sectarianism of the Soviet writers, who thrust British intellectuals of the type of Julian Huxley and Kingsley Martin into the "anti-Soviet camp."

Within the Soviet Union a rigid conformity was imposed by methods which Khrushchov himself has laid bare, a ferocious witch hunt was conducted against anybody who had any connections with the

West (such as " Jewish cosmopolitans," Social Democrats or former members of the exiled Polish or Czechoslovak forces in Britain), literature and the arts were placed in a straitjacket, the economics of the Popular Democracies were forced into rearmament and industrialisation programmes beyond their strength. International "solidarity" was shown by the persecution of Yugoslavia to mean uncritical acceptance of Soviet policies, and a strong adventurist streak disclosed itself in Soviet foreign policy. The extreme to which the rupture with Tito was taken was one example of this, and the Berlin blockade (intended to force the Western powers out of Berlin) was another. In innumerable ways the Soviet Union played into the hands of Bevin and other statesmen in capitalist countries, the outstanding example being the ludicrous case of the Soviet brides, whose irrational treatment for years poisoned Anglo-Soviet relations. The Soviet leaders, and Stalin in particular, were obviously grossly ill-informed about working-class opinion in the capitalist countries and for that reason alone were incapable of rallying the masses against the cold war. More and more the Soviet leaders came to rely on their military and economic strength to the exclusion of reliance on the genuine international working-class solidarity (not merely Communist solidarity) that saved the Soviet Republic in the wars of intervention, and played an important role in creating the anti-fascist alliance of the second world war. The change in working-class opinion towards the Soviet Union is worth serious study, most of all by the Soviet Communist Party itself. For far too long the Soviet Communist Party has been nourished by illusions that the spirit of the Jolly George is still alive today, and this illusion is still being perpetuated by people like Harry Pollitt who, when given the opportunity last year to discuss the question of Anglo-Soviet relations in a Soviet historical journal, threw away an opportunity to open a few Soviet eyes. Instead, he once more related the story of the Jolly George but failed even to pose, let alone to answer, the question why Anglo-Soviet working-class solidarity has declined so far today. In my opinion there is among British workers profound respect for the Soviet Union's economic and cultural achievements, and also respect for its military power. There is undoubtedly no wish for war against the Soviet Union, and a strong desire for friendship with its peoples; but equally the sense that the Soviet workers are comrades in a common struggle, to be defended against a common capitalist enemy, has very largely ceased to exist. This is partly due to the torrents of abuse and misrepresentation about Soviet Union that have poured out in the last 12 years, but also due to the fact that the British working-class dislikes dictatorship, police rule, concentration camps, torture, political murder, arduous physical labour by women, disregard of the right

and personality of the individual and other features of Soviet society which have been admitted, even if they do not all still correspond to the reality. Certainly Soviet society even since the post-Stalin reforms seems to bear little resemblance to the Socialism of which the British pioneers wrote and dreamed, in which there would be complete social equality and freedom of speech, assembly, writing and thought. The leaders of the Soviet Union still seem completely unable to understand that the wave of revulsion that swept the British Labour Movement at the time of the Hungarian uprising and the Soviet intervention was not due solely to misrepresentation by the capitalist press. Nobody who reads Edith Bone's story of her arrest and imprisonment, clearly typical of thousands, can fail to see that the Rakosi regime in Hungary had in vital respects nothing in common with the brotherhood of man, or with socialism.

In the speech in which he elaborated the theory of the two camps for the first time Zhdanov trotted out the familiar replies to the "slanders" of the Right-Wing Socialists and the capitalist magnates, explaining that as there were no antagonistic classes there could be no multiplicity of parties in the Soviet Union, and so on. The trouble about all these explanations, then and in subsequent years, was that there was a substantial element of truth in all too many of the "slanders." Consequently the impressive Soviet advances in industry and education, and in many other ways, failed to convince a multitude of sincere people, who were genuinely sympathetic to the Soviet Union and yearned for the successful construction of a democratic Socialist society, that the Soviet Union was in fact a democratic Socialist country. In the 1930s, when I and my friends were swept as students into the Communist Party and the anti-fascist struggles, the Soviet Union was an inspiration, a model to us of human and social justice, where a fine new society was being forged in the face of unimaginable difficulties, where (we imagined) the methods of political corruption, torture and the like belonged to the past. We believed that the existence of a single party was the outcome of the Civil War, we took the Stalin constitution at its face value, and we were persuaded that the Party, the trade unions and a multitude of other organisations had created democratic organisations of a new kind unequalled in any other country because they were based on working-class power and the public ownership of the land and industrial wealth. But the primary reason why the "camp of anti-imperialism and democracy," as Zhdanov called it, consisted only of the Communist-ruled states and the Communist Parties, and failed to rally a wider democratic or working-class support was precisely because it was not a camp of democracy at all. Had it been able to attract world-wide democratic support it would have been able to

split the "camp of imperialism and anti-democracy" asunder, thus killing the cold war stone dead from the start.

After the death of Stalin the rigidity that bound the Soviet regime broke, and there were many changes for the better both in domestic and foreign policies with which we are all familiar. When Khrushchov made his famous revelations at the 20th Congress it seemed, for a time, as if a decisive turn had been made away from the concepts and the methods that, for lack of a better term, are called Stalinist; in practice a considerable turn was made, but it was indecisive, and events in Poland and Hungary signalled a partial retreat. The 20th Congress, by disowning the Stalin terror and recognising the possibility of a peaceful transition to Socialism, seemed at first to open the way to a reconciliation with the left Labour and Social Democratic movements. But the subsequent refusal of the Communist Party leaderships to draw the necessary conclusions from the Khrushchov revelations destroyed what opportunity existed for a new move towards unity. Even more serious, the crushing of the Hungarian uprising completely wrecked the slow improvement in international relations that reached its highest point with the visit of Bulganin and Khrushchov to Britain in the spring of 1956.

It is perfectly true that the basic cause of the present international tension is the refusal of the United States to negotiate, and the enormous vested interest of American capitalism in the continued expansion of the armaments programme. But one of the reasons why, so far, the U.S. has been able to hold its alliance together and to proceed, stage by stage, to the rocket bases programme, is that the Soviet Union has consistently, despite some brilliantly timed diplomatic manoeuvres and some cogent initiatives for peace, failed to win over the masses in the capitalist states. In the Middle East, in Asia, and among the "uncommitted" nations the Soviet Union, by abandoning the two camps policy and substituting the Bandung policy, has achieved immense successes in scotching the American war plans and winning the masses for its peace policy. But in Europe and the U.S. the story is a very different one. The Hungarian intervention, and the resort by the Soviet Union to the language of naked threats (it has become almost boring hearing Khrushchov telling us that he can send us all to hell), have alienated democratic and working-class opinion, and enabled the Tory Government to cover up its guilt at Suez by stirring up feeling against the Soviet Union over Hungary. It was above all Hungary that destroyed the magnificent united movement against war at the time of Suez, and made it possible for the imperialists to intensify their military preparations and their aggressive manoeuvres.

It remains my belief that in the long run the Soviet Union must

evolve into a socialist democracy in which there is freedom of political expression, and freedom for writers and artists too; but until it has evolved much further than it has done in the last five years it will continue to present its enemies with powerful weapons, as well as deprive itself of all the inspiration that only an informed democracy can give to a nation. And this evolution can only proceed by means of an intense internal struggle to overcome the resistance of the ruling bureaucracy in party and state which wields immense power, even if it no longer resorts to terrorist methods. The continued attacks on the revisionists as the main enemy in the working-class movement only reveals the inability of men trained and moulded in the Stalinist tradition to make the necessary break with the past. There are forces at work in Socialist society, however, that are stronger than Khrushchov, and will carry the movement for democracy further than he wants to go. Nevertheless, at the present moment, a great effort is being made to crush the revisionist "heresy," even blaming it for the death of the American *Daily Worker*, which was killed not by the revisionists but by Khrushchov's speech at the 20th Congress. A considerable effort has been made in the past year, not merely to rehabilitate Stalin, but to try and re-establish the shaken unity of the world Communist movement and the leading role of the Soviet Communist Party within it. In other words, despite the new flexibility in Soviet policy that has partly healed the breach with Tito, there is also a partial return to the attitudes that characterised the "two camps" period. Khrushchov's attack on the "slanderous writings" of Dudintsev last summer, and his insistence on Party "guidance" and the banning of *Po Prostu* in Poland, were both symptoms of this trend.

There is reason to believe that the Soviet Union would have liked to see some new international Communist organisation set up at the conference of Communist Parties of the Socialist countries held in Moscow last November at the time of the 40th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Such a proposal, it is reported, was indeed made by the Czechoslovak representatives, but was not accepted. Clearly a majority of the Communist Parties within the Soviet bloc are not disposed to reimpose the disastrous regime of the Cominform Bureau even in a modified form. Nevertheless, the Declaration issued by the Communist Parties of the 12 Socialist countries was a step back to the bad old days of the two camps theory. The refusal of the Yugoslav Communist Party to sign it was significant, particularly because it was prepared to sign the peace appeal of all the 64 Communist Parties of the world. It was significant too that the Declaration of the 12 parties deals with policy, not only on the supremely important question of peace, but also on the problems of transition to Socialism

within the capitalist nations themselves. Since the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries confined themselves to the peace appeal signed by 64 parties, is it unreasonable to suggest that the 12 Parties have assumed an exclusive right to lay down the principles of Marxism and of Communist policy today, and that within the 12 the Soviet Union has again succeeded in partially re-establishing its dominating role? The analysis made by the 12 parties, although substantially true (particularly on the contrast between advancing socialism and declining capitalism), contains the old, old over-simplifications and half-truths that have so often led the Soviet Union into disastrous blunders — the old, old black and white appraisal of the "two camps." Is it really true, for example, that the working-class is "putting up increasing resistance to the policy of imperialism," when in France today resistance to imperialism is at its lowest ebb? It is untrue to say that in the socialist states "the working people enjoy genuine freedom and democratic rights," and that "people's power ensures political unity of the masses, equality and friendship among the nations?" Only those who are completely blind can fail to see that genuine freedom does not exist in a country where Tibor Dery is jailed, or Yiddish is denied free publication. It is in fact obvious that the monolithic unity sought by the leaders of the Soviet Union merely covers up whatever disunity exists, forcing the necessary political argument and struggle to take place through the factions that the Declaration condemns, and by underhand methods that produce the now familiar political explosions that from time to time expose the political conflict taking place inside the Soviet and other regimes in the present period of transition. The Declaration of the 12 parties has defined world working-class unity as support for the Soviet Union ("the first and mightiest Socialist power") and the socialist countries in a form that leaves no room for friendly criticism and self-criticism between the parties. And, although it was no doubt intended only as a warning to the Dulles war maniacs, the Declaration repeats the idiotic statement that if the imperialists venture to unleash a war "imperialism will doom itself to destruction." So it will, but socialism and civilisation itself will be doomed too. It is fantastic deception, if it is seriously meant, to imply that another world war could result in the destruction only of imperialism. Indeed, by seeming to imply that a third world war could result in a victory for socialism, the Declaration (I believe unintentionally) provides ammunition for those who accuse the Soviet Union of believing that Socialism can be spread by means of war.

The principles of Socialist Revolution adopted in the Declaration are an attempt to establish an agreed interpretation of Marxist revolutionary theory. It is noticeable that they do not include any refer-

ence to the defence or development of such democratic rights or traditions as have been built up by bourgeois society, and are accompanied by another vehement denunciation of the revisionists, whose position (as is always the case in Communist political polemics) is not stated accurately but simply caricatured. For example, the revisionists are said to declare that Marxism-Leninism is "outmoded" and has lost its significance for social progress; the revisionists "try to exorcise the revolutionary spirit of Marxism, to undermine faith in socialism among the working-class" and so on.

It is worth mentioning that it is Khrushchov and his colleagues, by invoking the word Leninist to confer a papal infallibility on their policies, who are resorting to the Talmudism they condemn, and who, by their failure to assess the situation honestly in certain respects, are departing from the Marxist tradition of objectively assessing the realities of a given situation in their totality and their development. The revisionists are also said "to deny the historical necessity for a proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat" As far as I am concerned this is not true. But we have to remember that while using traditional Marxist terminology we consider bourgeois democracy to be, in essence, "the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." Nobody in Britain would in fact apply the word "dictatorship" to our society. Equally, the term "dictatorship" would be inappropriate to describe a democratic society in which the working-class exercises state power but tolerates opposition parties such as the Tories today tolerate the Communist Party. The word "dictatorship" has come to stink since Marx's day, and the British workers do not recognise themselves as "proletarians." The use of this outmoded language is yet another proof of the inability of the Soviet leaders to understand Western Europe, and of the lamentable consequences that will flow from the leadership of the world Communist movement by a nation which has never had a democratic tradition.

The most fantastic of the Declaration's false assessments is its assertion that "in those capitalist countries where the American monopolies are out to establish their hegemony and in the countries already suffering from the U.S. policy of economic and military expansion, the objective conditions are being created for uniting under the leadership of the working class and its revolutionary parties, broad sections of the population to fight for peace . . . and overthrow the rule of the monopolies who betray the national interests." The sad truth is that in France the Communist Party, despite its large membership and voting strength, is more isolated than at any time since the war; that in Germany the Communist Party is not only illegal but uninfluential; that all over Western Europe the Communist Parties, except in Italy, have been declining steadily

since 1947, and have lost ground even more heavily since the 20th Congress; and that in Britain the Communist Party has become split and isolated, has retreated within its sectarian shell, and is incapable under its present leadership of leading broad sections of the people. The tragedy is that, at a moment when there is an immense latent support for a national peace movement, a desperate need for it, the British Peace Committee is without influence, and the Communist Party is so effectively isolated that it cannot give the leadership or organisational direction which a Marxist Party should give.

The "camp of anti-imperialism and democracy," as Zhdanov used to call it, included not only the Soviet Union and the other states in the Soviet bloc, but also the Communist Parties throughout the world. The participation of the Communist Parties in such a bloc, involving as that does the automatic and invariable acceptance or support of Soviet policies, destroys the independence of these parties in the political life of their own countries, and so makes it impossible to create genuine united, working-class democratic Socialist Parties. Unity of the Socialist movement will remain an unattainable ideal so long as Communist Parties identify themselves completely with the Soviet bloc. Soviet policy is dictated by national and diplomatic considerations as well as by purely Socialist considerations. For diplomatic reasons the Soviet Union has often, in the past, made compromises which a Communist Party that is free to speak should not support. The Stalin-Ribbentrop pact proved that, if nothing else did. But even a compromise that is fully justified from the standpoint of diplomacy need not necessarily bind a Communist Party in another nation. A Communist Party that binds itself to the Soviet Union in this way is liable to be discredited at any moment by some action of the Soviet Party over which it has no control. No Socialist Party is going to unite itself with a Communist Party on the footing that the united party is simply another Communist Party. That kind of unity, in which the Communists swallow the Socialists, was achieved in Hungary and no Socialists want to see it again. Moreover, participation in the Soviet bloc involves supporting the Soviet hierarchy in its struggle against the revisionists when the Communists and Socialists in the capitalist states should by giving every support to democratic and humanist forces in Soviet society.

The national interests of the British people require not our participation in the Soviet bloc, but the end of the system of rival blocs and the neutralisation of Britain. It is in our interest to be neither in N.A.T.O. nor in the Warsaw Pact, and neutrality should be the aim of the entire British Labour Movement. Only on that basis is unity possible. Instead of having a Communist Party bound to the Warsaw Pact, and Labour leaders bound to N.A.T.O., the entire Labour

Movement should withdraw from both blocs and assert its independence of both. The recognition by the Communist Parties that a peaceful transition to Socialism is possible will, in the long run, prove of help in achieving unity. But the unity of action between Communist and Socialist Parties which the 12 Parties urge will never come about until the Communist Parties achieve an independent status and deprive the right-wing leaders of one of their few legitimate reasons for resisting unity.

Does this mean that Socialists should not support the Soviet Union, China or Poland? It means nothing of the kind. There are rival socialist and capitalist economic systems in the world, and the future lies with the socialist system. In all that it does to build a Socialist or a Communist society the Soviet Union deserves the support and the sympathy of Socialists and workers everywhere. We should not be neutral in our sympathies. The faults and weaknesses of the existing Socialist societies can be corrected, because fundamental economic and social changes have already been made. The foundations are sound, even if alterations are needed in the superstructure. But in capitalist society, although there are some impressive goods in the shop window's, the foundations are rotten, there's dry rot in the timbers, and woodworm in the floors. Sooner or later the entire structure will have to be replaced!. But our sympathy and support for the Soviet Union, -China and the People's Democracies can never again be the blind and uncritical, and therefore terribly unhelpful, support that too many people gave in the past.