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STALIN AND DICTATORSHIP

"We are in favour of the withering away of the state,
yet we are at the same time in favour of strengthening the
dictatorship of the proletariat, which represents the most powerful
/most powerful and mighty of all forms of state power that
have hitherto existed. The supreme development of the powers
of the state, with the object of preparing the way for the
withering away of state power - such is the Marxist formula.
Is that 'self-contradictory'? Yes it is 'self-
contradictory'. But this contradiction is a living thing and
it is a complete reflection of Marxian dialectics. "— Stalin
~~wrote in 1936.~~

One of the biggest 'self-contradictions'^{in politics} is the fact
that intellectuals who are attracted towards the Communist
Party not through direct participation in the working-class

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struggle but through theoretical conviction, are often attracted precisely by the fact that the Communists are in the forefront of every campaign in defence of civil liberties and for the extension of freedom. Freedom - Liberte - Merdeka. - Freiheit - Inkululeko - in every language of the world Communists have rallied behind that banner.

And yet, paradoxically, ~~there has been one~~ chief characteristic distinguishing the Communists from the Labour Parties and Social Democrats, ^{all of whom believe} ~~and that is the insistence~~ by ~~Communists~~ that freedom, both political and economic can be won only if capitalism is crushed and replaced by socialism, ^{is the insistence by the Communists} and that owing to the certainty that the desperate forces of capitalism, ousted from power will resort to

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every means including war and violence to prevent the march to socialism, it is necessary in the period immediately after the people seize power, for the state to be ruled by a form of dictatorship - the dictatorship of the proletariat.

True, Communists have stressed that this is a dictatorship different from any known in the past; one based on the interests of the majority of the people and not on those of the oppressing minority, but they have

Communists never denied that ^{it} ~~this~~ was dictatorship nevertheless, and dictatorship ^{is an evil} involving restrictions on freedom - freedom to organise opposition parties, freedom of the press, ~~and~~ of speech, ~~and~~ of travel.

Dictatorship is an evil and ^{Progressives} ~~Communists~~ saw ^{the} dictatorship of the proletariat as a ^{temporary} ~~hateful~~ stage which the Soviet Union

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had to pass through in order to achieve a society where there would be no ~~world of~~ slums and starvation, ^{no} pass laws and jails; a society where not only would dictatorship be a memory of the evil past, but even the whole machinery of state which limits man's liberty - the police forces and laws and parliaments, would wither away, and mankind would live as one family on a new level of existence.

~~Progressive~~
~~Communists~~ have always looked confidently toward the day when the Soviet Union would find herself so secure that she could begin to relax the dictatorship. While the fear-ridden ~~capitalist~~ ^{western} countries retreated from the real freedoms of bourgeois democracy towards oppression and dictatorship, the socialist state ^{was advancing} ~~would be able to advance~~ from dictatorship to democracy on a new, higher, level.

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The first signs of readiness for such relaxation have been apparent over the past two years or so, with the easing of restrictions on travel, the relatively uninhibited flow of scientific information, the raising of the tight security guard which surrounded the government leaders. But

But the real signal for a dramatic change, after the mild hints in the published reports to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, was Kruschov's secret statement on the cult of the individual.

A trustworthy text of this statement is not ^{yet} available, but ~~and Communist Parties in several countries have expressed in~~ the view that their Soviet friends have - not to mince words - bungled their handling of the important announcement. It has been made possible for the capitalist press to indulge

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~~in an orgy of speculation - and this time it wasn't a case of smoke without fire.~~

though the details are not yet certain, the overall picture is. Progressives who had seen the Soviet dictatorship of the proletariat as a hard necessity and had thought that the men at the summit of the dictatorship were of so great a calibre that the hardship of dictatorship were only on the knuckles of those whose aim was to destroy socialism now know they were wrong

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~~Because the communist philosophy expressed itself in~~

[And that picture shows clearly that progressives outside the Soviet Union - and inside it - who had believed that the men at the summit of the dictatorship were of so superhuman a calibre that they were able to reduce the evils of dictatorship to a minimum were wrong. [The very leaders - Stalin included - who had written and spoken so clearly to emphasise the dangers of individual decisions instead of democratic ones; who had emphasised that power must be firmly based on the democratic decision of the whole ~~people~~ party and not on the caprice of individuals no matter how gifted; who had insisted on the need for utmost "socialist legality" in dealing with offenders - ^{according to Khrushchev's report} had all been living a huge lie for the past twenty years.

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~~Comments~~

When people asked ~~us~~ to explain the adulation of Stalin ~~they~~ said that it was a necessity during a particular historic period, that the tributes paid were not to him as an individual but to him as a symbol of the whole party and the ~~whole~~ first socialist state, and that Stalin himself was a modest man who hated the excesses ~~of~~ but submitted to them because this was the will of the party. It seems that ~~they~~ were wrong and that, according to the Krushov report, Stalin had come to love and believe in the tributes as being directly addressed to himself.

And it seems that while it was believed that it was a truth ~~hardly worth mentioning that~~ that hardly needed mentioning that ~~the~~ all important decisions were the result of

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the fullest possible democratic discussion within the party, and that none was ever taken arbitrarily by Stalin himself, this was also not so. A number of decisions, it seems, were made by Stalin alone, and the inevitable resulted, if decisions are taken by an individual alone - some of them were wrong.

And, perhaps worst shock of all, it seems that a number of people - and possibly a large number of people - who supported policies in opposition to the party line were treated ~~branded~~ as traitors though ^{their} ~~there~~ opposition was quite legitimate, or if not legitimate, did not amount to treason.

The reaction to Krushchev's revelations had differed ^{In the colonial and formerly colonial countries there has been no turmoil.} extremely widely in different countries. The huge Communist Party of Indonesia and the very active one in India have done

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no more than publish/official statements made in Moscow

and Peking, ~~and appear to have quickly taken have welcomed~~

Their leaders have welcomed the positive effects of the announcement and they appear ~~even to be~~ well-pleased with the situation. At the other end of the scale there has been an enormous impact on the very small hard-core Communist Party in the United States whose newspapers have played up their horror at the injustices revealed and have carried a number of articles in which communists write of

the "heavy load of guilt" which they feel they bear; and ~~has~~ has

been a similar impact on a far smaller scale in Britain

In ~~Britain~~ ^{suggested} Harry Pollit who ~~has~~ ^{has} drawn attention to the

~~fact~~ that the intellectuals in the party were focussing too much attention on the reassessment of Stalin while the workers were, ^{correctly, chiefly} more concerned with the new opportunities for

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~~12.~~

In South Africa, for reasons ~~much~~ somewhat similar to those in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the harmful effects of the revelations have been limited and there ^{seems to be} ~~is~~ enormous scope for stressing the positive aspects and their significance ~~xxxxxx~~ for our progressive movement. ~~One gets the impression even that~~ Though the public is eager for discussion progressives have been slow to take the opportunity offered.

What are the positive aspects that need stressing and which can serve to assist the march to freedom?

Standing out most boldly is this. That by bringing the criticisms of the methods of the Soviet party leadership during the past twenty years mercilessly to light, Khrushchev has taken the best means of ensuring that now a new era is

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indeed beginning. With the immense burst of discussion that has taken place throughout the Soviet Union, with the progressive movement all over the world alerted, there is little doubt that the conditions which were created for dictatorial rule will not again be able to arise.

Deliberately Kruschov has focussed the world spotlight on the Soviet Communist Party so that ~~communists~~^{progressives} in other countries will ~~not~~ know with confidence that the era is past when they should feel it their duty to rally under all circumstances to defend the actions of the Soviet Union against her enemies. ~~The Soviet Union is strong.~~ How is it imaginable after this that anyone, ^{on} from the lowest committee ~~to the~~ or the highest, will be able to set himself up as the man who takes

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the decisions and must be obeyed?

There are two types of question asked about the Krushov statement. One is "Why on earth did he make revelations like this which ~~xxxx~~ he knew would be seized upon by the enemies of the Soviet Union?" and the other is "How do we know that this can't happen again?". The two questions answer each other. The searing criticisms of the past which exposed the torn flesh of the Communist Party were necessary precisely to put people on their guard, to show what ~~xxx~~ had happened so that they would not let it happen again.

Progressives who felt it their duty to refrain from from joining in attacks on the Soviet Union under any circumstances in the past - and who, ~~like myself,~~ feel no "guilt" at all for doing so - will ^{now} ~~equally~~ feel it their duty

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constructive
to voice/criticisms and misgivings in the future.

And to start off with ^{they are saying} ~~I would say~~ that there are aspects
of the very announcement of the errors of the past ~~xxxxx~~ which
^{why was it left to the capitalist press to make the news to the world? This has got been full self-criticism?}
are not completely satisfactory ^A but that is of course the
subject of a separate discussion.

What stands out and cannot be sufficiently emphasised is
this - that the despotism of the tsars meant absolute misery,
~~xxx~~ despair and darkness for the people of Russia and her colonies;
that this misery, despair and darkness have been replaced in the
Soviet Union by a full life of hope, ~~and~~ relative plenty, security
and the confidence that a new ^{new} ~~life~~ is opening where man will be
a full free individual as dreamt of before only in written
utopias; that the strength of the Soviet Union has made possible
the more rapid winning of freedom by the people of China and of

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other countries which have suffered the yolk of imperialism -
AND THAT THIS TRANSITION FROM TSARISM TO SOCIALISM WAS POSSIBLE
ONLY THROUGH THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT.

That there were aspects of that dictatorship which led
to injustice and bloodshed is clear. But just as all the
~~xxx~~ mess, blood and agony are part of the birth of the
human baby, so ^{the} mess, blood and agony of the Soviet people have
given rise to their socialist state.

Inasmuch as their sufferings, ~~xxx~~ experiences - and
strength - now smooth the paths of other peoples to freedom
by new routes, what an enormous debt we owe them!